

WILLIAM F. HARRAH: MY RECOLLECTIONS OF THE HOTEL-CASINO INDUSTRY, AND AS AN AUTO COLLECTING ENTHUSIAST

Interviewee: William Fisk Harrah

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Description

William Fisk Harrah was a native of California, born in 1911. He grew up and received his education in southern California, where his father was an attorney and politician. During his college years, William Harrah and his family encountered in their various enterprises the problems related to the Depression. John Harrah suffered some reverses in business affairs, and at the same time the “games of chance” establishments that the father and son operated in Venice underwent law enforcement disturbances that ultimately led to their coming to Nevada, where gambling was legal.

In Reno in the 1930s, William Harrah found a congenial climate for his business talents, establishing bingo parlors, bars, and finally a gambling casino. The casinos grew from one in Reno to two with the expansion into South Tahoe, with hotels a natural extension. All of these ventures proved successful under Harrah’s perfectionist management. Within a relatively short time, William Harrah became a wealthy and respected gambling entrepreneur.

Another logical feature for the casinos and hotels came with elaborate stage shows and a “star” system unmatched in Nevada. The most famous figures of the entertainment world played at Harrah’s both at Reno and Tahoe. Everywhere, patrons and prospective patrons heard about flawless service in restaurants, casinos, and showrooms operated by Harrah’s. By the 1970s, when Nevada legalized corporate structure for casinos, the Harrah conglomerate was ready; trading in the company stock proved attractive from the beginning, with William Harrah retaining control of the management and operation.

Concurrent with the developments in gambling, Harrah expanded his longtime interest in automobiles into a consuming hobby that evolved into a world-famous automotive museum. Confessedly “goofy over cars,” Harrah spent increasing amounts of time and money in developing his collection and the museum, but not merely as a wealthy collector. He exercised his interest by attending sales, shows, races, and rallies all over the world. As a result, Harrah’s Automobile Collection shows the wide-ranging appreciation of its owner for nearly anything connected with his avocation.

This oral history contains Harrah’s recollections of his childhood and youth in California, his early business ventures there, and the years of growth in Reno and Tahoe. It also reveals the consuming love for the automobiles that built William Harrah’s distinguished collection. There are also discussions on Harrah’s property acquisitions in Idaho,

(Continued on next page.)

Description (continued)

his Middle Fork Lodge, and vacations which got him away from the gambling business. Notes on the Harrah family and a philosophical conclusion complete the volumes.

This oral history of William F. Harrah provides readers with a rare opportunity to be exposed to the unique and demanding Harrah style and to see how it was developed and implemented over the five decades that he was involved with the management of gambling and gaming operations.

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We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of
Leon Mandel in preparation of this script.

An Oral History Conducted by Mary Ellen Glass

University of Nevada Oral History Program

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PREFACE TO THE DIGITAL EDITION

Established in 1964, the University of Nevada Oral History Program (UNOHP) explores the remembered past through rigorous oral history interviewing, creating a record for present and future researchers. The program's collection of primary source oral histories is an important body of information about significant events, people, places, and activities in twentieth and twenty-first century Nevada and the West.

The UNOHP wishes to make the information in its oral histories accessible to a broad range of patrons. To achieve this goal, its transcripts must speak with an intelligible voice. However, no type font contains symbols for physical gestures and vocal modulations which are integral parts of verbal communication. When human speech is represented in print, stripped of these signals, the result can be a morass of seemingly tangled syntax and incomplete sentences—totally verbatim transcripts sometimes verge on incoherence. Therefore, this transcript has been lightly edited.

While taking great pains not to alter meaning in any way, the editor may have removed false starts, redundancies, and the “uhs,” “ahs,” and other noises with which speech is often liberally sprinkled; compressed some passages which, in unaltered form, misrepresent the chronicler's meaning; and relocated some material to place information in its intended context. Laughter is represented with [laughter] at the end of a sentence in which it occurs, and ellipses are used to indicate that a statement has been interrupted or is incomplete...or that there is a pause for dramatic effect.

As with all of our oral histories, while we can vouch for the authenticity of the interviews in the UNOHP collection, we advise readers to keep in mind that these are remembered pasts, and we do not claim that the recollections are entirely free of error. We can state, however, that the transcripts accurately reflect the oral history recordings on which they were based. Accordingly, each transcript should be approached with the

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In order to standardize the design of all UNOHP transcripts for the online database, most have been reformatted, a process that was completed in 2012. This document may therefore differ in appearance and pagination from earlier printed versions. Rather than compile entirely new indexes for each volume, the UNOHP has made each transcript fully searchable electronically. If a previous version of this volume existed, its original index has been appended to this document for reference only. A link to the entire catalog can be found online at <http://oralhistory.unr.edu/>.

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Alicia Barber
Director, UNOHP
July 2012

INTRODUCTION

William Fisk Harrah was a native of California, born in 1911. He grew up and received his education in southern California, where his father was an attorney and politician. During his college years, William Harrah and his family encountered in their various enterprises the problems related to the Depression. John Harrah suffered some reverses in business affairs, and at the same time the “games of chance” entertainment establishments that the father and son operated in Venice underwent law enforcement disturbances that led to their abandoning southern California for Nevada, where gambling was legal.

In Reno in the 1930s, William Harrah found a congenial climate for his business talents, establishing Bingo parlors, bars, and finally a gambling casino. All of these ventures proved successful under Harrah’s perfectionist management. Within a relatively short time, William Harrah became a wealthy and respected gambling entrepreneur. The casinos grew from one in Reno to two with the expansion into South

Tahoe, with hotels a natural extension. Another logical feature for the casinos and hotels came with elaborate stage shows and a “star” system unmatched in Nevada. The most famous figures of the entertainment world played at Harrah’s both at Reno and at Tahoe. Everywhere, patrons and prospective patrons heard about flawless service in restaurants, casinos, and showrooms operated by Harrah’s. By the 1970s, when Nevada legalized corporate structure for casinos, the Harrah conglomerate was ready; trading in the company stock proved attractive from the beginning, with William Harrah retaining control of the management and operation.

Concurrent with the developments in gambling, Harrah expanded his long-time interest in automobiles into a consuming hobby that evolved into a world-famous automotive museum. Confessedly “goofy over cars,” the gambling chieftain spent increasing amounts of time and money in developing his collection and the museum, but not merely as a wealthy collector. He

exercised his interest by attending sales, shows, races, and rallies all over the world. As a result, Harrah's Automobile Collection shows the wide-ranging appreciation of its owner for nearly anything connected with his avocation.

When invited to participate in the Oral History Project, William Harrah accepted graciously. He was a generous and good-humored chronicler of his life through fifteen recording sessions, all held in his office in the First National Bank Building in Reno, from December 6, 1977 to June 7, 1978. The oral history contains Harrah's recollections of his childhood and youth in California, of his early business ventures there, and of the years of growth in Reno and Tahoe. The oral history also reveals the consuming love for the automobile that built his distinguished collection. Notes on the Harrah family and a philosophical conclusion complete the volumes. Within only weeks after the finish of the taping session, William Harrah died following surgery. The oral history was reviewed by Mrs. Verna Harrah, who provided some corrections but no changes in the text. We gratefully acknowledge Mrs. Harrah's contribution to this work.

Dr. William Eadington's introduction to the oral history provides a scholar's assessment of its value as a research document.

The Oral History Project of the University of Nevada-Reno Library records the past and present for future research by taping the reminiscences of people who have been important witnesses to the development of Nevada and the West. The resulting transcripts are deposited in the Special Collections departments of the University Libraries at Reno and Las Vegas, where they are available for research. Mrs. Harrah has acceded to Mr. Harrah's wishes in designating

this oral history as open for research, and has generously donated the literary rights in the volume to the University of Nevada.

Mary Ellen Glass
University of Nevada-Reno
1980

SPECIAL INTRODUCTION

William Fisk Harrah was a very private man. However, he had greater impact upon the development of the casino gaming industry in northern Nevada and, indeed, in Nevada, than any other single individual. His company, Harrah's, has long been acknowledged to be one of the most profitable and best run in the casino gaming industry. It has also set a style for the quality and integrity of operations for casinos as well as for food service, entertainment, and hotel services that has been copied throughout the State and in Atlantic City.

The operations of the Harrah's casinos at Reno and Lake Tahoe were tremendously influenced by William Harrah's values and beliefs of sound management practices. The following statement made in 1974 by the former Vice President of Finance for Harrah's might just as well describe the management beliefs of William Harrah. "[Harrah's] management style could be characterized as highly centralized and detail oriented. Management is oriented toward perfection in even the slightest detail, and the

company emphasis is on quality, courtesy and friendliness and, of course, absolute honesty.¹

This oral history of William F. Harrah provides a rare opportunity to be exposed to the unique and demanding Harrah style and to see it develop and be implemented over the five decades Harrah was involved with the management of gambling and gaming operations. Harrah's first experience with running a gambling operation was helping his father run a "Circle Game," a variant of Bingo, in Venice, California, in the early 1930s. His father, who was an attorney, a former mayor of Venice, and a successful businessman in finance and real estate, lost much of his wealth following the stock market crash of 1929. He then opened the Circle Game on the boardwalk in Venice, and recruited his son William, a student at UCLA, to help him run the game. Although the younger Harrah admired his father's intelligence and business skills, the greatest business lessons from his father were negative. Harrah felt his father did not understand the needs or feelings of customers, and disagreed with his father on

attempts to save a few dollars when it implied discomfort for the customers. The younger Harrah also felt a gambling operation should have both the appearance and the reality of totally honest games. Therefore, when he bought his father out of the Circle Game in 1933 for five hundred dollars, he immediately put in new, more comfortable stools for the customers, improved the appearance of the parlor, and fired all the shills who had been employed to give the appearance there was a lot of action, but who in reality made legitimate customers question the honesty of the game.

Under William Harrah's direction, the Circle Game was quite successful; however, because Venice was part of the city of Los Angeles, the game was also illegal. For the four years that Harrah ran the Circle Game, there was a continuing pattern of running the game, getting closed down by the authorities, changing the game slightly and reopening it, and then running it again until the next time the authorities clamped down.

Harrah visited Reno in 1937 and was impressed by the legal and unharrassed status of gambling in Nevada. When he was given the opportunity to buy a Bingo parlor in Reno, he took it, and opened his first parlor in Reno in the fall of 1937. Over the next decade, he expanded and bought out a number of competitors, and learned a number of important lessons about the nature of the gambling business. First on the list was location. A good operation in a bad location will always have to struggle. Second was the importance of other diversions besides gambling. At one time, when he operated Bingo parlors on both sides of Harolds Club, he convinced Pappy Smith, the owner of Harolds Club, of the wisdom of cutting a door between the casino and Harrah's Bingo parlor. This allowed drinks to be served in the Bingo

parlors, and players to wander freely between the slots and table games of the casinos and the Bingo parlor, helping the business of both places. Third was the difficulty of making decisions when dealing with partners. Harrah had entered into a partnership when he purchased a Reno bar during World War II, but the business did not fare well because the partners could not agree on important decisions. This is probably an important reason why Harrah's, until it became a publicly traded corporation in 1971, was owned solely by William F. Harrah.

Harrah opened his first casino in Reno in 1946 and, after a shaky beginning, the casino performed quite well. This allowed Harrah to do some additional experimentation. He found that entertainment in a casino could be valuable for a number of reasons. It would give people a feeling they were somewhere special, and give them an excuse for visiting a casino. It would also give management something to promote in their advertising besides gambling, and thus market Harrah's in states where gambling was illegal without having to refer to gambling. Harrah also coined the term "gaming" to try to overcome the negative connotations which were often associated with gambling.

Over the years, the policies distinguishing Harrah's in the gaming industry evolved, often by trial and error, yet always influenced by the values of William Harrah. He learned early the value of not having to deal with employee unions. He avoided their formation over the years by treating employees properly, for example, by providing meaningful grievance procedures, promoting from within, and staying even or ahead of unions on wages and benefits. He also acknowledged, as his operations grew, he and his original management team would need help in running a larger and more complex casino-

entertainment operation. He was therefore not reluctant to purchase the services of consulting experts to evaluate management practices at Harrah's and indeed he established a reputation by the mid-1960s for being open to good ideas.

Harrah went by the personal philosophy that he wanted his customers treated in the same manner he himself would want to be treated. Therefore, whenever he traveled, he would note what was good and what was bad about the hotels he visited, and when he built his hotels in Reno and Lake Tahoe in 1969 and 1973, he implemented most of the good qualities and avoided most of the weaknesses he found in other places. He wanted his hotels to be places that were special, not "just a Holiday Inn type thing," as he once referred to Harvey's hotel at Lake Tahoe.

After Harrah opened the main showroom at his Lake Tahoe facility in 1960, he quickly learned the value of the quality of entertainment on the volume of play conducted at the gaming tables and slot machines. The best stars were the ones which drew the customers, those who gambled. Thus, a good star, such as Frank Sinatra or Sammy Davis, Jr., was worth far more to the operation than the receipts he could generate in the showroom. Quality entertainment, as with quality restaurants and hotel accommodations, were all part of a package which, along with gambling, could attract customers again and again and be the formula for a successful casino operation.

Yet for all the qualities Harrah and his operations were known for, the most important was the integrity and honesty of the games and of the entire casino operations. Gaming in Nevada, especially prior to 1960, had a national reputation of being associated with unsavory characters, being owned or controlled by organized crime, or of cheating

customers in rigged games. Harrah, who had acquired a respect for the law from his attorney father, believed from the start that if gambling operations were to remain legal in the long run, they would have to be run without any question of integrity. This attitude has permeated the Harrah's organization over the years; Harrah's has never been implicated in any scandal and has often been cited as the model gaming operation in the state of Nevada. In his otherwise scathing 1965 book on the questionable owners and operators of Nevada casinos, Wallace Turner wrote, "The people with foresight in Nevada, those who sit and think about the future of the state's gambling business, look on Bill Harrah as a shining example. If more gambling houses were in the hands of men like him, one is told over and over, then the future of Nevada gambling would be completely safe. In short, Bill Harrah is what they wish they had everywhere in Nevada."²

This oral history deals not only with Harrah's casino and hotel operations. There is also substantial discussion of Harrah's lifelong interest with the automobile and with driving at high speeds. Harrah's automobile collection, which is housed in a warehouse near his Reno casino operations, is world famous. Nearly half of the oral history deals with Harrah's cars and stories about the cars over the years. There are also long discussions on Harrah's property acquisitions in Idaho, his Middle Fork Lodge, and vacations which got him away from the gambling business. These discussions reveal more of the person, his values toward life and toward nature. In general, they are quite insightful to the personality of this shy and quiet man.

There were weaker sides of William Harrah which are also brought out in the oral history. In his earlier days, he was a heavy drinker and man about town. However, by his

early thirties, he began to realize the damage such a lifestyle was doing to his health, so he reformed. He was sometimes accused of being a perfectionist who could not tolerate imperfections in others; on occasion, his remarks reflect this. He was not terribly successful at matrimony; he was married seven times in his life.

William Fisk Harrah died on July 1, 1978, shortly after this oral history was completed. Within two years, the Harrah's Corporation was purchased by Holiday Inns, Inc., for a price in excess of \$300 million. The Harrah's name is now in Atlantic City, as the legal casino gaming industry spreads and becomes more accepted in other jurisdictions throughout the United States and in the world. However, it is likely that the influence Harrah has had on casino gambling will continue for quite some time both in the casino operations which carry his name and in a growing number of imitators.

William R. Eadington
Associate Professor of Economics
University of Nevada-Reno
October, 1980

1. J. George Drews, "The Business of Gaming: An Insider's View," in W.R. Eadington, (editor), *Gambling and Society*, C.C. Thomas, Publisher, Springfield, Ill., 1976, p. 164.

2. Wallace Turner, *Gambler's Money*, Houghton-Mifflin, Boston, Mass., 1965, p. 125.

EARLY LIFE, EDUCATION, FIRST GAMBLING EXPERIENCES

William F. Harrah: My father, John Harrah was born and raised in Newton, Iowa; and his father and his mother were both born and raised in Newton, Iowa. My grandfather (my father's father) was an attorney—a very nice man, who died quite young. I was just a little child. In fact, my grandfather's funeral was the first funeral I ever went to. I can remember it very clearly now. That was in 1919. And the high point of the funeral [laughs], me being a car guy, was my father borrowed a Marmon automobile to transport the family, which was a much classier car than our family car. And I remember more about the Marmon than I do the funeral.

Anyway they were all in Iowa, and I don't know who went to California first, my grandfather or my father. I believe it was my grandfather and my grandmother. They were getting up in years, and they had some money, so they moved to Pasadena, California. I believe my father and mother stayed in Newton, where my father was a practicing attorney. But I remember my father, too, said many times he was quite successful there

with his law business. Also, he made loans on farms around the area. Many times, he said the reason he moved to California was he just hated those cold Iowa winters, which was—I believed him, of course. I believed about everything he told me.

I remember when the winter Olympics were at Squaw Valley up here, we arranged for a house up there where we rented, and I stayed there during the Olympics and went every day, which was very enjoyable. And I invited my father up; I had plenty of rooms. And it was very funny—he was all bundled up—he came up from Arizona. And he went one day in the morning [laughs] and left—wherever he went out for lunch—why, he just went back to Reno and back to Arizona. He said, “I came out to get away from those damn cold winters!”

But on getting back to—he moved out, and his father was in Pasadena, and they were quite close. But Pasadena was pretty ritzy, and he couldn't afford that, so he bought a home in South Pasadena, which is where I was born. I have an older sister that was born in Newton.

Then I was born soon after the family moved to California. And the house where I was born is still standing; my sister told me that. (She keeps track of the family better than I do.) She's an artist, and she drew a little picture of it one time on a Christmas card. And it had a little sign on the lawn; it was real cute. She had the house and the address and South Pasadena, and the little sign on the lawn said, "Bill Harrah was born here." [Chuckles] So last spring my wife and I were in Los Angeles for a few days, and I said, "Hey, let's go to South Pasadena and look at the house," which we did, and it's still standing. It's a real neat little house.

But he was in South Pasadena, and he started going to Venice—or to the beach. He loved the ocean, he loved the beach. I think my mother dad, too. And so soon after I was born, they moved to Venice and bought a home (I'm sure they bought it; they didn't build it—maybe they did build it) right on the waterfront. And it was what was called the South Beach; that was south of Venice. Most of the residences were north of Venice. On the South Beach where we lived, about halfway to then Del Rey, I think there were only three houses in the area—three or four. And they were all older people except one nearby house; they had a daughter that was a little older than me, a little younger than my sister. And we three kids were the only ones in that area, which was kind of disappointing because I didn't have any boy friends till I—just about till—well, they started moving in, so—. Wait, I'm gettin' away from my father, aren't I?

Well, we moved to Venice. [The] first story I'd like to tell on my father—he knew a lot about automobiles, too, although later in life he lost interest; I mean he lost an intense interest. But he always had good cars, and he could work on 'em himself. He had, I think,

the second car in Newton, Iowa. But when he first went to Venice—there's sand there, of course, sandy beach. And not knowing any better, he went on a Sunday. And there was a lot of traffic and difficult to park, so he drove off in the sand and parked. And of course, when it came time to leave, he couldn't get out [laughing]. And the way he told the story—he was great at telling stories on himself; when he'd goof, you know, he'd get so mad at himself.

But we lived there—my sister and I and my father and mother—and we had a lady that was a combination housekeeper, baby-sitter, whatever—named May Aydelott. She was with us for years and years and years. She was an old maid; they brought her out from Iowa, and she became just a member of the family, really took care of my sister and then me. And then when we were older, she just helped my mother. And then later, my grandmother moved to Venice, and May spent, oh, the last fifteen years or so with my grandmother. They associated just in the family till—I can't remember who died first—my grandmother or May. But then it was one of those things; they were about the same age and so close that it was one died, and two months later the other one had died just— they were both old and feeble.

Looking back, I can see that my mother was very vivacious and really a neat person, full of life. She entertained quite—she had a lot of lady friends. My father wasn't too social; my mother was very social. In fact, she was voted at one time the "most popular girl" in Newton, Iowa. The church had a thing. Fact, she told me one time—. She used to go back a lot after we moved to California when she was homesick for her mother—her father died when she was very young, and her mother had died when I was just a baby, so I never knew her. But my mother had a brother back there, and also she had many, many, many friends

in Newton. So we had a kind of a pattern that she'd go back about every summer for maybe a month. Looking back later, I could see that she was very homesick. She liked California—he loved California—but she liked it all right, but she was very homesick. So to cool her down, why, he permitted her—or encouraged her, I guess—to go back and stay about a month, which she just loved. And then after a month, why, she kind of had her fill and back we'd go. And I remember those very vividly 'cause it was a new life—Iowa—to me after the sand and the—. The Midwest is beautiful in the summertime, the grassy lawns and the trees. Back in those days, of course, we went on the train, and that was just super—riding on the train and eating in the dining car—I loved that. But she did that for many years.

Her brother didn't amount to much. His name was Roy Fisk—her maiden name was Fisk. He was an awfully good man—friendly and lovable Uncle Roy. I liked him very much. But he'd been a ball player, and he was a very good ball player—a professional baseball player. And he got in the then—well, not in the major leagues, but I guess was as high in the minor leagues as you can get. I never saw him play, but he had a good reputation as a ball player.

Then he married my Aunt Della, and they never had any children. Roy worked for Maytag. Of course, Maytag washing machine was the heart of Newton; still is, for that matter. But he worked for them, and then he never did very good. And finally my father, at I guess my mother's urging, invited Roy to California. So my Aunt and Uncle Roy and Aunt Della drove to California in their 1923 Buick, which I can remember perfectly. And they lived near us, and I liked [my uncle]; he was very friendly and all, but he just wasn't any good working. He took advantage of my father because of the relationship, and he

drank a lot. And so I remember I was just on the edges as a little child, but I remember Uncle Roy would just mess this up, so they'd move him over to another—my father had many things going. I guess I inherited that from him. Like he had various things on the Venice pier and parking lots and shooting galleries, one game—the “Dodge” game—which my Uncle Roy ran for a while, and on and on. But Roy would—he drank a lot, and I remember the “Dodge em — that was a money making thing. And Roy got in there, and he hired too much help. And they were actually running the place, and he was never there. He was drinking and messing around. And it started losing money just because of the heavy expenses. Roy was really bad news as long as he lived, to my mother and my—but that's part of life, I guess.

In getting back to Maytag, who was a quite—a very wealthy family—they were the family of Newton. And my mother, as I said, was the most popular girl, and she went with one of those sons, Elmer Maytag, for a while (I think it was Elmer—there were several of 'em). He was very interested in my mother. I later met him, and he still liked her, too. But she preferred [Dad], even though he was a rich boy, and everything. She without any hesitation—I've been told by friends and all that she liked my father, and she didn't want any part of Elmer, which, of course, was very nice. But then she used to kid me once in a while—said, “Your name could've been Maytag.” [Laughs]

Well, Venice was a fun place to grow up in. We lived right on the water, and the climate was good. I swam most of the year, not all year. I can't remember when I couldn't swim. It's just like—people say, “When did you learn to swim?”

I'll say, “When did I learn to walk? I just can't remember when I couldn't”.—and my sister the same way.

We lived in that home for oh, until I was maybe ten or twelve. Then we moved a couple of blocks up the street. I can remember where we lived by what kind of a car we drove cause [at] the second home we had a 1922 Franklin; so as I was born in 1911, I was eleven when we moved there—thereabouts. And then the Boy Scouts—I was twelve—I loved the Boy Scouts.

Then my father became active in politics in Venice, and the reason he did was—. 'course, he became mayor, and I was the mayor's son, which was really somethin'—why, it was pretty good. Looking back on it, he had no political ambition whatsoever. But the town was very corrupt. It wasn't a part of Los Angeles then; it was an independent city. About everything from what I know now—there were just crookedness, and painting contracts, and—you name it—there was somethin' goin' on. So he worked hard to clean it up and didn't get too far, so he ran for mayor—well, they called 'em trustees then, which were councilmen. He was councilman, and then he was elected mayor. I think he served two terms. He wasn't the most popular because he didn't—there were a lot of sleazy politicians that he didn't fit in with.

I remember in those days—well, it was almost full circle that they could print about anything in the paper about anybody, and you just couldn't—. And the paper was owned by nobody; and if you sued them, you—you know. And I remember I used to read—nothing bothered my father, but my mother would really get upset. They would tell the story about—be in the headlines on the paper during the election, you know—the week before, “John Harrah was seen in this nightclub upstairs with this blonde,” and “he was drunk” and “his arm around her,” and all. And he never drank, ever in his whole life,

and he didn't mess around, and it was just, you know—he said, “Well, that's crazy!”

But she said, “I know it is, I know!” But she said, “But what'll people think?” and all.

Anyway, to get to the point, he got reelected as long as he wanted to be. But then it got to be so bad, he was so disappointed—what Venice could've been—he could see what it could've been—it could've been super. Like Santa Monica stayed out of Los Angeles. Los Angeles, like most big cities, wants to grab every inch around it. And it grabbed Venice. I remember they would have meetings—the annexation committee—and he would go, and he'd protest, and people would say oh, how wonderful it was gonna be when they went into Los Angeles. And it wasn't; all it did was, they changed some of the good laws Venice had, and we paid our money to Los Angeles—our taxes. But my point is, Santa Monica didn't enter. And at one time Venice was far superior, was larger than Santa Monica, and it was cleaner, and it was neater, and today, why, Santa Monica is one of the nicest little cities in southern California. It's in the ball park with Beverly Hills. It's just real neat, and it's an independent city. But that's what happened.

But anyway, when they voted to go in and they went into Los Angeles, why, I remember his saying—I don't remember the exact words—but he said, “That's it,” he said, and he said, “I'm through here.” And he had property here, and he had property there and businesses here and businesses there, and he just sold 'em. No sacrifice, but someone wanted to buy em—“Okay, here you are.” It wasn't hard to deal with him. And he sold just about everything he had, and we moved to Hollywood, and by then he was in another line of business. He had gotten into the trust deed business, which was very lucrative. Are you familiar with a trust deed?

Well, there's a mortgage—you know what a mortgage is— a piece of real estate. Well, then a trust deed is very similar to a mortgage, but there's a few different laws concerning it. So you can take a piece of property, and you can get a trust deed on it instead of a mortgage [if] you want to borrow money. But usually a trust deed is a secondary mortgage, but it's seen for some legal reason. But at least in California, a piece of property was mortgaged, and then the people wanted some more money, and either the mortgage or mortgagor didn't want to enlarge the mortgage—then they would get trust deeds which in effect was the secondary mortgage. But then they went in that order. So if, say, the property owner didn't pay—defaulted on the trust deed, the trust deed owner could go in and take the owner's position; so the trust deed owner became the owner of the property, subject to the mortgage.

So my father and a man named Johnny Moore, who was a brilliant man—which was part of my education. He was one of the smartest men I ever met, and he'd never gone to grammar school. He just had it as far as real estate was concerned—just a genius. They were partners, and they made a good, good team. They made a lot of money. What they did was, they would buy a trust deed, like a five-thousand-dollar trust deed; and somebody needed money real fast, which happened. They advertised for them—okay, “trust deeds bought.” So here you come with a five-thousand-dollar trust deed on a piece of property, say worth fifty-thousand dollars and add maybe a twenty-five-thousand- or twenty-thousand-dollar mortgage on. So they would buy the trust deed, and the five-thousand or forty-two-hundred sum real fast. And, “I need the money” [claps hands], “Here you are.” And then they would—whatever made sense—acquire the property or take their time

and sell the trust deed at market value. And they were very careful, I remember.

Johnny Moore, my father's partner, couldn't drive a car, and so a lot of my time was spent in driving him around. My father'd be doing—and I would drive Johnny Moore somewhere, which was really fun. And I remember [chuckles] Johnny and I loved to drive fast. And Johnny Moore was diabetic, which I learned somethin' about health from him, as he later died from it. He had terrible eating habits. But it affected his eyesight, so he couldn't—he could look at a piece of property— you'd take him to Saugus, or somethin', and he could see the layout of the [property], and he could see where this was and that was, and here's the building where—and he could appraise it down to a dime. But he couldn't see small, so he couldn't read the speedometer. So I would drive him up there, we'd be bouncin' along pretty good in one of the Franklins. Their top speed was sixty (and I always drove sixty [laughs]), and Johnny'd be shakin' a little bit, and he'd say, “Bill!” He said, “I can't quite see what that speedometer says. How fast are we going?”

I said, “Oh, we're goin' forty-two, Johnny.”

He said, “Well, okay.” [Laughs] He never did know!

But anyway, they did very well. We moved to Hollywood, and we had a lovely home there that I liked very much. Then when the Depression came, why it changed everything. But I can come into that later.

Oh, that's enough on Venice and the early days, isn't it?

Mary Ellen Glass: You went to school there, too, though.

Oh, gee whiz, yeah, yeah. That was neat. I went to Florence Nightingale grammar school, and it was a big thing. I was a timid

little kid, and I don't understand why; I was just scared of my shadow. Other little kids just went to school, and then the year before I went to school, I worried about it. What I worried about was not going to school; I worried about not doing the right thing. I wanted to do the right thing; I really worried about it. So I can almost still remember my first day of school. And I think my mother or May Aydelott took me and got me in the right room and all. And I lived nearby the school, so I was supposed to go home at lunch—all of which I knew. So I got in my little desk, and I sat there. And so they had recess, and they didn't—no one said it was recess; I guess everybody knew or maybe they did say it, but I missed it. And I thought it was lunch time, so I went home at ten in the morning. And so my mother was surprised to see me and thought there was a big problem and, "What's the matter?" I said I came home for lunch. "Well, it's only ten o'clock." And then everybody figured out it was recess.

So then I had to go back, and that was ten times worse than going the first time because I came back—I guess my mother took me back—and here this room was full of kids. And it's in session, the teacher's there, and Bill had to come in.

But I liked my little school, and I did very well. I loved school. So the first grade and the second grade—it was a two-room schoolhouse, which I loved very much. Well rather than two-room, they had two rooms, and they had two classes in each room. So then I would be in the lower—you know the story. The class above me—I knew mine, and then I would listen to theirs; so then when I got up there, I already knew it. So I was outstanding compared to what they had; I was very good. So then I had some teacher that said I was so good, I should move up. And there was no place to go in that school;

so they sent me to another school, Martha Washington, which was right in downtown Venice, only east a little bit. But it was a big school compared to my little school. And I went there, and the school had already started when they transferred me. And so everyone was a stranger, and everything was new, and it was just total disaster. I hated it, and they weren't too thrilled with having me because I was kind of a misfit. So I remember those days just—that lasted about a month, and I just hated every day.

And then finally, my folks figured out what was goin' on, so they got me back in my little Florence Nightingale. And then I was real happy. So that went through the sixth grade, and then it was the Venice High School, which was a nice high school. And there was a Venice Junior High School, and I went to Venice Junior High, which I liked very much. And we took the streetcar to go to that. By then we'd moved up to the other part of Venice on Sunset Avenue. But it was just a half a block to the streetcar tracks. The Pacific Electric was quite an extensive streetcar system. Then, you know, they went from downtown Los Angeles clear out to Santa Monica and Venice, and you could go the other way—you could go clear to San Bernardino. It was several hundred miles you could ride on this Pacific Electric; it was a big thing.

So the streetcar I took to high school was the regular streetcar, rode the line from Venice to Los Angeles. And the junior high school and the high school was about oh, two or three miles, four miles towards Los Angeles from Venice. And they had a special they ran every morning—three or four cars, and it was all full of high school kids. I remember the worst job, I think, in the world, was being the conductor on the special. There were some real smarty kids that just rang the bells and put caps on the tracks and put the brakes on, and they'd

get so crazy [laughing], those conductors, and it was a—.

But anyway, Venice Junior High I liked that very much and had some good teachers there—at least I liked them. And that's when I found out that I was never gonna be an athlete. Playing around—like I could swim real good, and I could ride my bicycle real good. I could do anything the other kids could do that we played. Baseball, I've played a little, and I was just as good as the other kids. Then I got into junior high school, and I was very—you know—I was six-foot-three and a hundred and thirty pounds or something. And I was reasonably fast but very weak; I couldn't lift anything or—anything. So I had learned pretty fast I wasn't gonna be an athlete, which didn't bother me at all. I didn't really care for football or anything; I liked baseball.

But I remember in the Boy Scouts, which I already said I dearly loved—and I was a Tenderfoot and a Second Class and a First Class. And these merit badges—I had merit badges up and down both my arms [gestures], and I just loved the Boy Scouts. But the one I couldn't get was “athletics.” You had to run so fast and jump so high, and that was one that you had to get to be an Eagle Scout—I had all the others—and I just couldn't run fast enough or jump high enough. Well, for people like me, then, you could get a merit badge in “physical development,” which they would check you as of certain date; and then six months or a year later you had to show that you had developed physically. And I really tried for that one, too. I exercised and ran, and at the end of six months I was just the same [laughing]! So I never got to be an Eagle Scout, and that's one of the big regrets in my life. I would've just given anything to have been an Eagle Scout.

Getting back to the car, I guess—the Scouts reminds me, I had a Hudson I was

driving, and so I had kind of an in with the scoutmaster because I had a car at my disposal. I guess I was old enough to drive. But I learned to drive when I was urn—let's see—somethin' like eight years old. I remember we went to Big Bear—that's a mountain area in southern California. We went there every summer, which was real neat because living at the beach—and then summertime, you don't want to go to the beach, so we'd go to the mountains. And we would rent a cabin up there—I think we went three years and maybe even four—and they called 'em housekeeping cabins. It was a two-cabin, had a little kitchen and all, and we would move up there for a month or six weeks—my father and mother and May and my sister. We lived there, and we'd set up our kitchen and refrigerator and everything. And my father would go to Los Angeles. And generally, he'd go on Monday, come back on Friday. And then sometimes he'd be there during the week. He was a lawyer, and maybe he wasn't too busy; he loved it up there like we all did. There were very few people up there then.

I think he was driving a Chalmers at the time. But he'd found an old Hudson somewhere. It was about a 1911 Hudson. It was right-hand drive, which in those days, in 1916, was a funny-lookin' car because everything else was left-hand drive. And the old Hudson—it was right-hand drive, and you had to crank it to start it. And I could drive it fine, although I couldn't see over the steering wheel. But I could drive it. But I couldn't start it 'cause I was so little. So I would park it on a hill—this was with my father's okay—and I'd park it on a hill, and then after breakfast or somethin' I'd want to go to the store for my mother, or just go for a ride. I'd go out and coast the Hudson down the hill a ways and let the clutch out and away it would go—“chug, chug, chug, chug, chug.” So like if I did go to

the store—of course, the store we went to, it was on a hill, so I had no problem there. But anyplace where it was level, then I would very carefully keep the engine running because if it stopped, I was dead. [Laughs] I liked that old Hudson; that was a fun car.

But Big Bear was a great experience up there because of the—to get up there was an old, narrow road, and you had to have a pretty good car to get up there. It was real interesting to me, the cars that could make it and the cars that couldn't. Quite often the real fancy cars didn't do as well as the Dodges and things, which, 'course, was a part of the interesting thing.

Another thing I remember about Big Bear was the pine trees. See, it was about, I think, 6,000 feet—just about what Tahoe is. It had these pine trees in the forest and all and the pine nuts and the pine cones and the squirrels, all of which was entirely new to me. And I can still remember that. That was very enjoyable.

I remember they had one place at Big Bear—see, it was tiny, maybe just a few hundred people there at this time. The Pine Nut Lodge was the main store, and they got ice cream, I think, once or twice a week. And the big thing—like Tuesday or Thursday or whenever it was—and we'd go down and get ice cream. I can still remember that.

Then we moved to Hollywood in 1926. And the timing was just perfect for me because I finished junior high school in June of '26 and started at Hollywood High School in September of '26. And the first grade of high school was seventh grade, so it was just—fit real neat. My sister, 'course, had finished high school, I believe—yeah, she finished Venice. And she was one of those—you may have had that experience if you have sisters or brothers—older ones. She was a straight-A student; actually everything was A's and with not too much effort. And so I come along

and William Harrah—"Oh! You Margaret's brother?"

"Yes.

"Oh, I expect great things from you, William." If I heard that once, I heard it a hundred times. I always got along great with my sister, but if I ever had any hard feelings, that was one of them. Some A's were pretty easy for me like mathematics and all, but some weren't so easy, and she got 'em all.

But she, having gotten out of high school in Venice, then wanted to go to college. I don't know why she went to Mills College in Berkeley, whether it was friends or school chums or maybe just wanted to get away from home. But she went to Mills for, I think, one or two years, and she liked it pretty good. Then she switched to UCLA, where she got in a sorority and got a little social life. And she lived in Hollywood with us, '26—yeah, she was in Hollywood a little later. I guess she was gone, yeah, the first couple of years.

I went to Hollywood High School, which I loved Hollywood High School. I thought I was really somebody going to Hollywood High. And by then I had my own car, which was a big event in my life—a 1926 Chevrolet, which I have a duplicate of in the Collection. My father was wonderful to me where money was concerned, or things that I wanted.

There was one time when I was very young, maybe six or seven or something; and I asked him one time—oh, I remember, it was my second bicycle—my Ranger bicycle, which I had a bicycle he'd given me, and it was a second-hand bicycle. It was a pretty good bicycle, but I wanted a new one. So in June of—I must have been eight or nine—I said, "In September, my birthday, can I have a new bicycle?" I knew the one I wanted; I don't know if I told him that. Yeah, well, I guess I did. I wanted a Ranger Moto Bike, it was called; it looked like a motorcycle, and it

was just the super-bike of the time. I still think it was. And I had a catalog on it, and I was all excited. I remember it cost sixty dollars, which was a lot of money. And I said, "For my birthday can I have a Ranger Moto Bike?"

And he said, "Oh, somethin' I want to tell you, Bill." He said, "Birthdays and Christmas," he said, "those are for— they're okay—the present giving," he said, "but that's mostly for your mother and your sister. They like to make big things out of the holidays and the birthdays. But," he said, "you and I," he said, "anything you want that I can afford that your friends have—most your friends have somewhere," he said, "you can have. If I can afford it, you can have it." And he says, "Just ask me for it, and we'll go get it." And he said, "You can't have any better than your friends, but no worse." He said, "I just want you to stay even with everybody." And he said, "Just ask me, and we'll do it."

So he said, "Let's go get the Ranger;" this was in June. I remember we drove to L.A., and bought the bike. I remember it was sixty dollars, and he wrote out a check. I thought at the time, "Gee, it's wonderful havin' a rich father!" [Laughs]

But then when it came time for the car—. The first car was—I just wanted a car, and it had to be a low-priced car; I knew that without talking or discussing it. So all there was at the time was—well, there was Ford and Chevrolet and Star. And I'd studied them, of course, every inch, and I preferred the Chevrolet for several reasons. So he went down and bought me a 1926 Chevrolet roadster. I think it was six hundred dollars, somethin' like that. And that was a big thrill. It had to be ordered, I remember; it was a new model, so they didn't have any in stock. And it had to come in from the East in the freight car. And I remember I went down to the dealer's shop every day—maybe twice a

day. "Where's my car? Where's my car? There's my car?"

And I guess I really must've bugged them 'cause I went down one day, and I walked in; they said, "Your car's here! Your car's here!"

I—"Wow! There is it?" Well, it was. It had just come in on the freight car, hadn't been unloaded and all. And they—to get rid of me, I think—at the time I thought they were being nice, but I think it was to get rid of me—"So why don't you go down and help 'em unload it?" which of course, I did. And what a thrill that was to go to the freight car, and here's the little Chevy roadster all jacked up. And we pulled it out and towed it out and put water and gas in it, and away it went. And then I dolled it all up. I can remember every single thing I did to it—I changed this, changed that, changed this—a lot of details I won't bother the story with.

The car's in the Collection. Well, a few little things, like, I always wanted a neat-lookin' car, so it had a single spare, and I put two spares on it, and I lowered it. And nickel plated—they had lights and put extra lights—I think I had thirteen lights on the front end of it. It was really dolled up.

I didn't hop it up any, and looking back, I don't understand that. It's the only car I ever owned till recently that I didn't hop up. I put a straight pipe—exhaust pipe—on it, some fancy horns, but I didn't do a thing to it to speed it up. And it would go fifty-five miles an hour, and I drove it at fifty-five [laughs] miles an hour a lot of the time, and— which doesn't sound as crazy as what it sounds in town, because there wasn't very much traffic then. And, of course, I was a super driver with—a sixteen-year-old kid has coordination you wouldn't believe, you know. Even with my little two-wheel brakes, I could do all sorts of things.

But then staying on cars, my next car was a '29 Ford Cabriolet. And that's the one I

hopped up—well, the first one I hopped up, which was—Model A Ford—was fifty-five to sixty-five miles an hour—and mine'd do about sixty. I put overhead valves on, so it would do eighty. And so I drove it eighty! [Laughs] And it was so funny' I would get arrested quite a bit, I think it was on an average of once a week, in southern California 'cause I drove so fast. And being a juvenile, they couldn't fine me. So they would take me down—the only thing—I guess they still do it today. I had to go downtown to a juvenile officer and go in and sit down. It was like being punished in school. And he went, “da da da da da da da” [shakes finger]. He knew just what he was going to say, and he knew I knew what he was going to say. But he had to do it, and I had to listen, so it would be ten or fifteen minutes of bawling out. And then when he'd get through, he'd say, “Now you're gonna slow—.”

I said, “Oh, yes sir. I'm gonna slow down.” So then I'd go out. Next week I'd be sitting in the same chair hearing the same lecture!

So that went on and on, and I think my mother had to take me down or something, it was quite a nuisance. So my father got wind of it. So he's the lawyer, and he liked to speak his piece. So he really thought it was kind of dumb anyway—my going down. It was just those spinning wheels, you know. They were accomplishing nothing; I was accomplishing nothing. So he wrote 'em a letter. It was a very nice, legal letter; but he got his point across—”So-and-so, and you're bringing my boy down there, da da da da da. Why don't you quit pickin' on him, leave him alone, or something. John Harrah”—which Harrah is an unusual name. But there was a policeman, a detective in the L.A. police department at the time, and I think was even in the juvenile division. But he had nothing to do with the traffic; it was other. But his name why, “Oh, wow!” So it put a red flag on it.

So because of my father's so-called nasty letter, whoever came up before said, “Well, we don't want to bother with that Harrah kid any more. Let's refer everything to juvenile court from here on, every time.”

So I remember the juvenile court was on the top floor of the Hall of Justice, which you see on TV many times. The Hall of Justice is still there. When you see a detective movie in L.A., why, they wind up on the Hall of Justice. And I don't know—it was the eighth floor or somethin'. I had to go to juvenile court every time. And it was so ridiculous. My mother had to go, which really upset her. And I remember one time it was really funny, looking back. But I went, and was sittin' there with the other “defendants.” And they brought them in. I came in with my mother, but they brought them in from jail. They had handcuffs on, and one was a rapist, and one was a murder suspect—real bad kids. And you could look—it was just terrible—and I'm sittin' there right next to them.

So they called one and—murder one—and then his defense, “Oh, blah, blah, blah.” So they postponed it. And then the second one was somethin'—assault, and attacking girls and everything. So then, okay, “William Harrah. Faulty muffler.” [Laughs] That was the judge. He started to say, “What the hell is this?” but he caught himself. He said, “What in heaven's name is a boy doing in this court for a faulty muffler?” And of course, the prosecutor had to try and explain it. And the judge was kind of mad. And he said, “Well, blah, blah, blah. This boy and his speedings—.”

“Well, he's not here for speeding. He's here for a faulty muffler—most ridiculous thing I ever saw! Case dismissed!” Which I was very thrilled, 'cause it was—made me nervous goin' to court. I didn't mind goin' to the other place, but goin' to court was scary. But I remember

my mother and my father got a big kick out of that.

You skipped rather fast over some of your school days. I wondered, since you were so interested in engineering and mathematics, and your business sense has been so well developed, if you recalled something from your school days that might have—.

Oh, I see, yeah. Well, math was always fun and still is. But I know I liked any subject—any exact—like math was “two and two is four,” period. And when it got into “maybe” and all, it wasn’t nearly as interesting. So I remember math and physics was very interesting to me just because of that. So then I did, I liked math. I remember chemistry and I didn’t get along too good, which was my own fault.

But in high school I just took what other people—I had no idea where I was going or what I was gonna do. And most kids didn’t. There were a few that did, and I always kind of was jealous of them or at least admired them, that they had a direction. And my father didn’t give me any—you know—many people would say, “Well, your grandpa’s a lawyer, and your father’s a lawyer; you’re gonna be a lawyer.”

And my father right from the start said, “This is a lousy business. So if you want to be a lawyer, be a lawyer, but,” he said, “no way am I gonna—” he said, “you do whatever you want to do.”

And from what I’d seen of the law business, there was—I looked at it like I guess most kids do—of the courtroom stuff, which, of course, most law isn’t; but that’s what I saw. And courtroom to me was always bad news and screamin’ and yellin’, and da da da da da; and I thought, “I don’t want to spend my life that way. I want to get up, and when I go to work, I want look forward, happy—oh boy, I’m gonna be nice to people. I’m going to be

pleasing them rather than fightin’ with them [gestures fist fight].”

My father was a very good lawyer in that he—it didn’t bother him at all. He prepared—he was in the law firm for years (Harrah, Lewis, and Blodgett was the name in Los Angeles) The three of ’em were quite different. Lewis was excellent in court. Blodgett was good in criminal cases. My father was the guy that dug it out of the books and prepared the cases. He was very capable in court, but mostly he did the work. So when Harrah, Lewis, and Blodgett appeared in court, they were well prepared.

But he didn’t really like it, and he got into so many other things. Well, like the Venice Investment Company’s a good story. Was living in Venice; he didn’t practice in Venice. He practiced in Los Angeles, as I told you. But there was a George Cleveland, who was a very interesting man, in Venice—a go-getter, another man with no education but a real genius business-wise. And he had a theater, a movin’ picture theater. And someone else had a movin’ picture theater, and George thought it’d be a good idea to start a chain. I think maybe there were three theaters. So they wanted to form a partnership or a business association of some kind. And this was six o’clock at night or something.

“Where can we get a lawyer?” Well, I guess there were a couple of lawyers in Venice, and somebody knew my father, and they called him. “Could you come in? This is a big deal for me. I’m a very good friend. And we know you’re home (da da da), but we just need—we wanna put this deal together tonight. Can you come in and draw up the papers?”

And my father—yes, he went to this meeting. So they were goin’ along, and they were formin’ this—well, maybe there were four or five theaters—I guess there were—and four or five partners. So this man’s theater

was worth fifty thousand, and this man's theater was worth eighty thousand, and this man— and all. Say, they were shootin' for five hundred; and they had some money, but their whole thing—they were about fifteen or twenty thousand dollars short of what they needed to form this company, the Venice Investment Company.

So my father said, "Gee, this looks pretty good to me." He said, "I'll put in twenty if you want me as a partner."

And they said, "Oh, love to have you, John."

So he put in the twenty, which was a shock to (huh!) my mother and all. It was "Gee, we're in the theater business!" And it was so neat. It was a good company, and this George was just a super guy. And they opened other theaters. These were Venice; Ocean Park, which is between Venice and Santa Monica; Santa Monica, and Hermosa Beach, Redondo Beach, and somewhere else. I think they had eight or ten.

And movies in those days, then, or no TV or anything— that was a big thing. They had first-run movies, of course. And my father being one of the owners, we all had passes. I had a pass, and my mother and my grandmother had a pass. And they were for loge seats, too, and I remember what a thrill it was having that pass.

But I also learned something about business from that 'cause after they started with four or five theaters, or maybe three, then they opened four or five more. And we would go to all the theater openings. And there was nobody actually runnin' the thing, and it was just kinda second—I mean the actual building, the theater. When they were finished, they were good theaters. They were well designed, but there was no time table. And I remember it would drive me up the wall. I remember when the one in Ocean Park

opened—and when it was like, supposed to open at seven o'clock at night, and on such a night. And they had the searchlight in the air and the huge crowd and all. And we went up; and because of who we were, we went right in at quarter to seven—my father, my mother, and all— and went in, and they only had half of the chairs down. And there were workmen there, and they were screwin' the chairs down and not goin'—you know, a row every twenty minutes or so. And so I could just instantly see that it was gonna be midnight, you know, before their evening. And I was horrified! Just what a terrible—I was embarrassed. And it didn't bother my father a bit. He just, you know, that's the way it was.

And I didn't get into to it too much then, but it happened over and over. Every theater opening was total disaster. It was—they opened about two days before they should. And I remember getting into it, and I was always with him, and try to learn, too. And I said, "Why don't you get the seats down before you—21"

He said, "Oh, so what? What got hurt? The people saw the movie, didn't they, didn't they?"—you know, all of which was true, but it was lousy.

And I said, "Well, shouldn't we have planned a little better?"

"Oh, poohy." He just—.

And he wasn't too good with the general public. His thinkin' and mine on the general public—he never called 'em suckers or anything, but he just—. He didn't want to cheat 'em, but he didn't want to give 'em too much. I remember the Circle Game in Venice, that's in the '30s. But when he built that—and he built it just as cheap as he could—he had twelve-dollar stools. And I'll never forget our competition had thirty-dollar stools, and they were padded real soft, and ours were hard and cheesy-lookin'. And I remember I complained

about the stools, and my father said, "What? You want better stools? Why? You know, you can sit on that."

I says, "Look at Carpenter's stool, his beautiful stool!" Well, then, he couldn't see that at all. It was a total waste of money.

And the Bingo parlor's the same thing. Robbins, who were up here—you know. Ed Robbins, I guess, is still around; but Ed and Harry were our competitors down there, and they were really operators. And they had—Robbins Palace is what they called their Bingo parlors. And they were just beautiful with chandeliers and super soft chairs; and they were expensive, of course, but they were just beautiful. And ours were just terrible lookin'. That's somethin' my father could never see.

Hollywood High was—I can remember that. And I can remember my first day, which was scary; but I got into it right— real fast. And I met some friends, some who are still my friends—the ones that haven't died. They were my closest friends in Hollywood High School. I made friends at UCLA, but my true friends were at Hollywood High School.

I loved the school. And we had a football team that was just fair, but we had a good school spirit. Our colors were red and white. I went to all the football games. And there was a football coach that I liked very much, and I wasn't a football player at all—Vic Kelly. He was part Indian, and he was an excellent coach. And I remember he wore beautiful clothes which I've always been a clothes freak. But most football coaches at that time dressed in sweatshirts and things, and Vic Kelly always had a brand new suit on. He came there, and our team was pretty low, and after a year or two he brought us up. And one year we won the championship—the L.A. city championship. We played maybe eight games and won 'em all. And I can still remember

that, when Hollywood High School won the championship.

I said earlier, I was kinda weak, but I did understand cars and motors and things. And they had a Fordson tractor at the school that they used to plow the football field, level it, and so on. And I was the only one that could start the Fordson tractor; it was kind of balky. And there's a little trick to starting that with a little old quick flip, and having the spark and everything just right. And you had to crank it, and I could crank it. And I remember what a thrill it was; one of the janitors could crank it, but when he was unavailable or something, I remember more than once I'd be sitting in one of my classes, and a messenger would come and interrupt the teacher. The messenger would say, "Vic Kelly

I wants Bill Harrah on the football field right away [laughing].

And the teacher'd say, "Dismissed" or "Excused, William." And away I'd go like this [gesture strutting]. Vic Kelly wanted Bill Harrah. And I'd go down and start the tractor for him. [Laughs] That was fun.

But at Hollywood I made friends, and there was [Bradstreet] Brad Miller and Todd Brown—are two close ones. And then others'll come out. Todd is gone, and Brad is still alive. He lives in Los Angeles. He's still a very close friend. I see him once or twice a year. We reminisce.

Digressing a little bit—well, it's the same period—see, I started at Hollywood in '26. And I met Brad—oh, that was interesting—I'd known Brad in Venice. And he had moved to Hollywood the same time I did—just coincidence. (Yeah, that's where I knew him.) Anyway, he and I had planned this way ahead, I'm sure, but in 1926 we took a trip. He had a 1925 Model T Ford. That's before I got my Chevrolet. So in the summer of '26 we drove his Model T. We just—he and I took a trip

with his father and my father's permission for ten-day—two-week—trip in the Model T Ford—just two boys. Brad's a year older than I am, so I was fifteen, he was sixteen—in his Model T Ford. And we drove from Hollywood north through Bakersfield, and then we went up through Yosemite Park and over Tioga Pass and into Reno and back through Sacramento (and he had some relatives near Sacramento) , and then back to L.A. And it was very exciting, I being a car person, and to drive that far. 'course Brad—and we are extremely good friends—but I drove us only to—a Model T. Ford, if you know how to drive a Model T Ford, there was this pedal on the left—that's your gears— and you push the pedal clear to the floor, and that's low. Half up back is neutral, and all the way back is high. So, of course, most of the time you're driving in high gear. Then you come to a Model T Ford—a good one will climb a lot of hills in high gear very well. But you come to a very steep hill, and you have to go into low, and you have to hold it with your foot down—your left foot. And it vibrates a little bit, and to hold it for ten minutes or something, it becomes very wearing. And then you try your right foot, and it's very—it's not much fun.

So learning to drive like I did—. So we started out, and Brad was driving; it was his car. And from L.A. to—I don't think we made Bakersfield the first day. You know, thirty miles an hour was pretty good, and a Ford, thirty-five. But he drove, and that's fine. I didn't think of driving; but I thought just without—subconsciously—I'm sure I thought, "Well, I'll be driving from time to time." But I didn't get to drive, and I didn't get to drive and I didn't get to drive, and I didn't get to drive. And I didn't ask, but it was really growin' on me, and I wasn't quite as friendly to Brad as I was. Here he's doin' all the drivin',

and I'm just sittin'. Very disappointing, very disappointing.

So then in Yosemite, and we camped out and all. And then we started over Tioga, which is very steep. So he drove to just where he had to go into low, and he was really smart. Just before he got there, he said, "Oh, Bill, would you like to drive?"

I said, "Oh, whee, yes!" [Laughs] So I got in and maybe drove twenty feet, then had to go into low because of the hill. I guess he knew the road or somethin'. So I went up that darn thing, and it was maybe ten miles or something just in this Model T Ford and low gear, so that's a half an hour, forty-five minutes in low. And one foot, and the other foot, and da da da da, workin'. But I'm drivin' the car; it's kinda—but my feet are gettin' so tired. And I couldn't wait to get—I knew the road a little, too. Eventually it leveled out; and wow, I could get to drivin'. So it got to the top, and it leveled out; and I just started to shift into high, and Brad says, "Okay, I'll take it now." [Laughs]

And I thought, "What a dirty guy!" So, it kinda—from then on, our friendship wasn't really the best. We got along, but the last few days of the trip he drove the whole thing. And we didn't talk too much, and it was extremely—I've told him many times.

But we came to Reno, and I remember Reno in 1926. I don't remember any casinos, but I wasn't lookin' for any. But we stayed—I don't know if the motel's still there. We found a motel between Reno and Sparks—and it was cheap, of course. And there weren't too many; they called them somethin' else then. What'd they call 'em?

Auto camps.

Yeah, auto camp, yeah. And it wasn't too bad, but it was very cheap. And we were

thrilled, you know, staying, cause we'd been camping out quite a bit.

I remember we stayed in Bridgeport in a hotel there. I don't know if it's still there, that old Bridgeport hotel.

That was very funny—the Model T Ford with its planetary transmission. And the gears—it's always really in gear. And there's a lot of oil in there. And a Ford, you start a Ford that's cold—the Model T Ford—and with oil in the transmission it'll move forward. And you can hold it back till the oil warms up, but it will automatically, you know—you watch out—you crank a Ford, and it'll start moving forward.

Well, Brad in Bridgeport—and it was in July, I'm sure, And we got there maybe at night, not late, but dusk, and this Bridgeport hotel, whatever it was. We went—they had a room, and it was a nice room. We were very delighted—had dinner. And he parked the Ford, and he pointed it against the hotel. All the other cars were, but they had conventional transmission to them, with a neutral. And of course, this car you had to self-start it before it did.

But then the next morning Brad went to start it, and it was very cold. You know, Bridgeport in July, it got way down. So the oil's very cold. So he went to start it, and it wouldn't start because the starter couldn't turn 'cause the Ford would push against the hotel. [Chuckles] And it was up there, and so he was very embarrassed and very mad because his wonderful little Ford wouldn't start. And, of course, by then I wasn't too friendly, anyway, and I was going, "Huh huh huh" [folds arms].

So then, what you do with that, in a case like that, you jack up one of the rear wheels, and which is good as jackin' em both up; and that wheel can turn. And so the engine, the transmission, the drive shaft—everything

turns. And you can start it, and then it'll warm up; and then you can stop the wheel and jack it down and drive it away, which we did. But he was very embarrassed with his little Ford. And the other cars were just comin' out and startin' their cars and drivin' away, and here the Ford wouldn't start.

But I remember, for dinner we had a little money. Brad's father was—he was a wealthy man. He was very cheap. And I never liked him too much, and I don't think Brad did either. But Brad's father and mother were divorced, which was unusual in those days. And his father was very bitter. Brad reminded him of his mother or somethin', so he would just—. Brad had another brother that got treated a little better than Brad did, a younger brother.

But I remember, like for the trip, I went to my father and said, "Da da da, I'm going here and I need some money." And he knew I wanted to go, and I had permission.

He said, "What do you think you need?" And I don't remember the numbers exactly, but just for numbers, say oh, maybe eight dollars a day for ten days is eighty dollars—just two of us that would be.

And he said, "Well, how's a hundred or somethin'?"—you know—"Here you are."

And then we went to Brad's father. And well, he had it all figured out, you know—fifty cents a day for gas and twelve cents for this. And I think he gave thirty dollars. And Brad was very embarrassed, and I don't know if I was there or near. And Brad didn't tell him that my father'd given me a hundred; I don't think he gave him over forty or fifty dollars, and that was—just a real cheap guy. And he had so much money. Brad suffered all through his childhood. He was always kind of a second class to the rest of us because of his father. And Brad hustled good, which maybe—maybe it helped him that way.

But when I got—this leads to this other story—then I'll go back. On my Model A Ford—'29—which cost eight hundred and some dollars, which was quite a bit. That was a Cabriolet, a fancy body style. And at the time—well, it was time for a car; I'd been sick, which I'll get into later. And it was time for a new car. So my father says, "What do you want?"

And I said, "I'd like a Chrysler 72." That's a 1928 Chrysler, which was a super car. It was about a fifteen-hundred-dollar car. And we have one in the Collection. In the day it was just one of the outstanding cars of all time—a '28 Chrysler 72 Sport Roadster. I said, "I want a Chrysler— '28 Chrysler 722"

And here, plenty of money, and he said, "Well, who do you know that has a—who of your friends has a Chrysler?"

And I said, "Well, nobody." But I said, "Paul Grade has an Auburn Speedster," which was a little better than a Chrysler.

And he said, "Paul Grade isn't really—he isn't a close friend." He said, "What does Todd Brown have?" And let's see Todd had a Model A Ford. "What does Harry Clamp—" that was another good friend—"What does Harry Clamp have?"

"Harry Clamp has a Chevy."

"What does Felix McGinnis have?"

(He's a friend from Venice that I'd forgotten.)

"He has a Star."

"And then what does Brad have?"

"Brad has a Ford."

So he said, "Well, they all—" he said, "That's classy." He said, "You could have any of those." But he said, "Those are your friends. You should have what they have." So that's when I got the Model A Ford. And at the time it was very disappointing. And then later I could see—it I'd've got the Chrysler 72, I would've lost Brad and Todd—I mean I wouldn't've been as close. And we were

extremely close. But we all got kicked out of school the same time. [Chuckles]

We had an apartment near the high school, which for no reason—I don't know why we got the apartment—just to be smart. We all had a little money, and I guess other kids had apartments. And of course, it was a no-no. It was just about a block from Hollywood High School we got this apartment. I think there were six of us went in and paid, maybe it was eighty dollars a month or seventy or sixty—I don't know—but it didn't cost too much. We could afford it for five or ten dollars apiece. And we'd go up there after school and just hang out, you know. We didn't have any girls there or anything. Just the guys and smokin' cigarettes and maybe drinkin' a little bit. And we did smoke and drink a lot there. I remember at one time, word got to the principal immediately, of course. So he sent a detective, who looked like a detective, you know—you knew instantly. Anyway, we were there. And this one day, the only day of the three months we had the place, we were all behind in our classes, and there was an exam the next day or so. And we said, "Damn it!" and we were real serious about passin' the exam. And we were gonna study here and there; and no, no—it was too noisy. And we weren't all there, but there, were four or five of us. "Let's go up to the apartment and really hit this." It was all the same subject, and we were really workin' on this real hard.

So this detective come up and knocked on the door and pretended to be lookin' for a number or somethin', or he wanted to borrow a cup of sugar or some darn thing. And he was a real nice, friendly guy; and he said, "Can I come in?"

And "Yeah, come on in." And we moved our books over. "What do you want?"

And he didn't see what he expected to see, so he kinda made a bum excuse and left. And

we go, "What was that all about?" And we'd kinda forgot it.

So then we got word indirectly later that—this teacher's name was Foley, the vice principal; and he really hated all kids. He was one of those guys that—the principal was real neat, but Foley was just a—he loved it when he could catch you doin' somethin', I honestly believe.

So this detective came back to Foley, and Foley said, "Did ya find the apartment?"

And "Oh, yes.

And "Did you get in?"

"Yes."

"And what were they doin'?"

"Studyin'." [Laughs]

So then I think we got that from the detective 'cause Foley was—4t wasn't what he wanted to hear! But anyway later we did get caught. And everybody got kicked out of school.

But this was prohibition time.

Oh, yeah, but liquor was just, you know, no problem at all. Pay your money and get your liquor.

Oh, there was another one, too. There was an Eddie Phillips and an Eddie Scanlon, who are both dead. They were neat guys. Eddie Scanlon was a real go-go-go-go-go-go. And he was very small in stature. Even when he was fifty years old, he was five-feet-two, which he didn't like at all. But he always dressed real neat, and he always had a little money, and he was really the swinger, you know.

So we were goin' somewhere one night, I remember. One afternoon we had our girls, and I don't know whose car or anything. But there were two or three guys and two or three girls, and we were goin' to a football game or somethin', and it was all legit. And we were goin', and we'd run out of cigarettes.

And we all smoked. So we stopped—I guess I noticed it first, and I was driving. So there's a drugstore. I pulled up, and I started to get out. And I was much younger; I was two years younger than Eddie. I think Eddie was the oldest. But he was so little, and he was really a man of the world, or thought he was. So I started to get out, and he said, "No, no, Bill! I'll get 'em." So he ran into the drugstore; and he's five minutes, ten minutes—you know—I think, "What happened?" We're all lookin' at each other.

So pretty soon Eddie come out like this [head hanging], and he said, "You can go get 'em, Bill. They won't sell 'em to me." [Laughs] So here I go in—two years younger but a foot taller—and just, you know—"How many do you want? Here you are" [laughs]. Yeah, little Eddie Scanlon. And Eddie Phillips—that was a real neat guy.

How did you all get kicked out of school?

Oh, I think we were warned on the apartment, and I think maybe we switched apartments. Then we did have one real bash there. And I think I missed that. It wasn't by being a good guy—just doin' somethin' else that day. Everybody got real drunk and passed out and all. And the police came, and it was all—. So they got kicked out, and I was—another kid and I— maybe Brad or somebody—were kicked out at the same time. They kicked us all out. There were maybe eight of us. But our defense wasn't as serious as the others, and we knew it. But everybody had to bring their parents. And old Foley—you know—he just really hated us all. So I remember my father had to go down with me, which wasn't pleasant at all—when I had to take my father to school. And what was the principal's name? He was a real neat guy.

Anyway, when we got into it and all eight kids were there and the parents and everything and—I wish I could think of the principal—it doesn't matter. But Foley had reported all this to the principal. Then one by one they—the parents went in and talked to the principal, then came out; and then the next parent went in. The kids—we all sat outside. And I may not be getting this exactly right, but it is generally correct.

So anyway at my turn it was just my father and I and the principal. I remember that. So they went in, and they closed the door. And it wasn't really too serious, but it was kinda serious. I didn't know then whether I was gonna get kicked out or not.

And so they didn't close the door quite, and I was over here. So it was fifteen minutes, twenty minutes, forty minutes. I thought, "Oh, brother"—you know, the longer it goes on, the worse it is. Finally I couldn't resist; so I went over, and I kind of tiptoed. And I think the door'd swung a little, so I could really—I could hear, and if I wanted to, I could see in the room.

So I kinda peeked around the corner, and my father was I saying, "And as I've explained to you, Principal So-and-so — whatever his name was—"that's why I feel a trust deed is far superior to a mortgage." [Laughs]

And the principal said, "Well, Mr. Harrah, I've never had anyone explain it to me so lucidly. Thank you very much."

And then later I asked what happened. He said, "Well we talked about you for two minutes, and we talked about real estate for forty minutes." But I didn't get kicked out. I got campused or something—I forget—didn't amount to much.

But I think Brad got kicked out—he did. Harry Clamp got kicked out. I think maybe Eddie Phillips and I were the only two—everybody got kicked out. And they had to

go to another high school. They couldn't go, though.

I left out some things like on the South Beach, which I talked about, where I was raised and learned to swim. And I said that my sister and I and the neighbor daughter was— were the only kids there, which was true; but then it started building up. And I had a very close friend down there named Felix McGinnis, which I think I mentioned earlier.

But he and I had—my first car was '26 Chevrolet roadster. And Felix got a car at the same time. He was a year older than I was, but we were real close friends. He got a 1925 Star roadster, and we dressed 'em up quite a bit alike. And we used to ride around and take both cars. We'd go somewhere, just the two of us, but we'd take both cars. And I remember mine was prettier and [chuckling] had better acceleration, but he had about one mile an hour more top speed than I did. And we'd get to racing, which we did quite a bit—flat out. And he would always beat me, which was—why I didn't hop it up, I don't know.

Felix was a real interesting kid. He had an older brother named Jim McGinnis. In fact, I was at Felix's wedding; he married—a very social, big wedding in L.A.—the biggest wedding I've ever been to in my life. And Jim, the older brother, was kind of quiet.

But prior to this, before the wedding, in the hills—in the sand dunes down there—and there were ducks down there. And Jim was hunting one time—duck hunting—by himself. And I think he shot a duck, and it fell, and he ran through the sand dunes to get it, like you do, I guess. And he tripped and fell, and his gun went off, and it hit him in the jaw. And it blew the—it was a wonder it didn't kill him. But it blew his jaw of f, but it left the hinges, fortunately.

So he was—the doctors and all—and he didn't die. But he needed this plastic surgery—this is in the '20s— which was pretty new. So in St. Louis they had apparently a hospital or a doctor that was very good. So Mrs. McGinnis and Jim were back in St. Louis except for short trips for several years. And they took his ribs and all and built him a jaw. And, 'course, there were scars. But he grew a beard, and so he didn't look bad—he was a red-headed fella—except for the beard; it was very prominent. I never cared for beards too much. But he's alive today—he looks real—looks fine. He has it neatly trimmed, and beards are in style, you know.

And he was an interesting guy. Felix kind of dropped out. I know Felix; I see him maybe once every five years or something, if I see him. And Jim I see at least once or twice a year. We just became close friends. But I admired Jim since Felix was kind of a goof-offer. But Jim, he got behind; because of all his operations, he couldn't go to school. And I'm sure he studied on the side.

But anyway, he got out after these four operations, and he was maybe eighteen, to twenty years old. And then when he could get around—and he had no high school diploma or anything. And as I said, he studied on the side. Anyway, he went back to high school, and he did four years of high school in a year by taking the tests you know. Then he went to—I think he took an entrance exam and went to Stanford. And he was just as good as you can do at Stanford. And he was—what was he takin'? Yeah, medicine. He was gonna be a doctor because he got so intrigued with it and all his operations, so he did. And he, as quick as you can squeeze it in, became a full-fledged doctor of medicine.

And he started in that; and he said, "Oh, this isn't for me." So then he went in psychiatry, and I don't know how much study that takes.

But anyway, he's one of the leading psychiatrists in southern California now. He has movie stars and all—I guess it's, you know, fashionable to go to one whether you need it or not. He's just doin' super good.

And he's a funny man. He's one of my best friends— cause this phone [points] could ring any time of the year— he has all my numbers, which is fine with me—and it'll be Jim McGinnis. And he seldom calls (he drinks once in while) unless he's been drinkin'. [Laughs] And he's one of those people that—you know, he slurs his words but very slightly. And his mind is perfect. And he is very witty. And he will call and talk for forty-five minutes. And one of those people— usually you get a person like that, and I want to get off the phone in two minutes. But Jim, I enjoy the whole forty-five minutes, and I will actually just write a note to Cindy [secretary], you know—"I'm tied up for an hour," while I'm talking to Jim.

He comes up once in a while—once a year. We just have a wonderful time. And I admire him so much.

And I'll put one more on the McGinnises— well, two more. Their father was the manager of I think it was Central Hardware in L.A., and he was one of the nicest men I ever met. And as I said that [the] wife and Jim were back East, so it was Felix and Mr. McGinnis. I always called him for years. That was the family, and they had a—I think, a housekeeper or something. But he was manager of this hardware company, and it was the biggest one. It was impressive just to go—wholesale hardware; they sold to hardware stores. And because of my friendship with Felix, why I got permission—and right away—to go to the hardware store and buy anything I wanted and at the wholesale price—at their price. And I could—no limit—and then I could go and say, "I want twelve screws and four bolts"

or somethin' like you do at your retail and get it. I remember it was so wonderful with hoppin' up the cars; and I always wanted some odd pieces or tools, and I could get 'em. Mr. McGinnis was so great.

What was the other one on them? Oh yeah. Felix was married to Maizell Hart [McGinnis]. Her father owned a bunch of hotels. She was very wealthy. And it was [a] fashionable wedding. There were ten ushers, and on and on and on and on, and hundreds of people, and the Wilshire—Figueroa Street in downtown L.A. It was an exciting wedding.

And then afterwards they had a reception at the Ambassador Hotel, which was the hotel. So the wedding was at two o'clock or something, and the reception went on—it was four or five o'clock, And then there was dancing, you know; it was absolutely just—and the flowers and the orchestra and on and on and on. So we were drinkin' and—everybody—and the bride and groom disappeared, of course. And so it wound up Jim McGinnis and I. Everyone had gone—all the guests—just Jim and I. And there was a lot of champagne left, so he and I were just sittin' around drinkin' the champagne and talkin' and laughin', havin' a time. And of course, the waiters were all gone, but the—maybe the captain and one other in charge were waiting for us. And it could've been midnight or something—I don't know—but it was very late; and the tables were all covered, and they're waiting for us! And so they started wrappin' up the champagne, you know, and kinda—“Okay gentlemen, good bye [gesture, shoving out].

And so Jim said—and he was pretty drunk—he said, “What's the matter?”

I said, “Well, it's no more champagne.”

“Well, why not?” you know, “I'm the groom's brother. Why can't I?”

“I'm sorry; the party's over. Mr. Hart just said to let it run till nine o'clock, and it's midnight.” And “No way,” and so on and so. The words got tougher and tougher.

So Jim rose up like this [very straight], you know, and stood up, said, “Okay! I can't—” he said, “Come on, this is a public institution; can I buy a bottle of champagne?”

So you could see the guy's mind working. And he thought, “Oh God, maybe if I let him buy the champagne, I'll get rid of him.”

So they went, and they come in, and they have the champagne and the ice bucket. And they took the lid off with a white towel and all, you know, and poured it, and they gave Jim a bill for twenty dollars or something. It was wonderful champagne.

So Jim does this [searches pockets], you know. [Laughs] So he turned to me, and he says [whispers], “Can I have twenty dollars?”

And I got a big kick out it, and I guess I was as drunk as he was. And I slipped him the twenty, which everybody knew what was goin' on; and I think I said [whispers], “Aren't you gonna tip them?” [Laughs] So I- think he gave 'em twenty-five dollars. He still remembers that, and I still needle him about it once in a while. But he's a neat guy.

Then all through high school I didn't study. In my group it wasn't fashionable. In math I still did good 'cause I liked it. But everything else you didn't study, which my kids don't do; and I understand why they don't sometimes. We just didn't study. It was a no-no. You didn't study. You were a sissy or something.

And I had the teachers, and—”William, you're a smart boy. Why don't you do your work?”

And “Oh yes, Miss So-and-so, I will—yah dee da dee da.”

So, “William, you want to go to college, don't you?”

“Well, yeah, sure.”

“Well, you don’t get your grades, you can’t go to college. And you’re gettin’ C’s and D’s, and you should be getting A’s and B’s. Dee da dee da,”

And so it was ’26—I was the class of ’29. So in the fall of September ’28—yeah, that’d be the class of ’29, yeah—for some reason I woke up while one of the fellows that was kind of on the edge of us, not really—there were several—and one was goin’ to Stanford, I remember. And I said, “Well, how are you going to get into Stanford?”

He said, “Well, I got the grades. No problem.”

And Stanford I always—to this day I would’ve loved to have gone to Stanford. I don’t know why, but

And then another boy that I kinda respected was going somewhere to an east coast school or somethin’. “So how are you going to—” He had the grades.

And I thought, “My God, I guess you do have to have those grades.”

So I took a look at it, and I was just terrible. So then I turned around completely, and I worked real hard, and I added—carried extra—like you’re supposed to carry four or five, and I carried six or seven. And I made up all but just oh, maybe not a year and not a half a year—between that—I didn’t have to get in a major college.

So there were several of us in the same boat—Brad and Todd and my girlfriend Pacquita Yriondo. She was oh, a Basque—yeah—Spanish Basque, whatever they call it—real neat girl. We’re still [chuckles] friends. She wound up at—we all went to California Christian College, which was a little school. That’s when UCLA was on Vermont, and Cal Christian was right across the street, and they only had maybe hundred and fifty students. And it was a Christian—I mean there is a

Christian religion—it’s just called Christian. And Cal Christian was their college, which is still going on, only it has a different name now, and it’s moved and everything, of course.

But Cal Christian you could get in—we could get in with our kind of poor grades, but still it was accredited. And any grades you made at Cal Christian were accepted at UCLA. So then I just aimed my subjects at getting in UCLA, which I didn’t want to tell ’em I was doing. So I took some other stuff, but some subjects I didn’t even hardly bother with them—maybe quit along the way. But the credits I needed, I got it—took calculus, too—. And then the following year then, I got to UCLA. But it was kind of hard work, and it made me appreciate

Kind of funny at UCLA. At Cal Christian, among other things I took was Spanish. I’d taken Spanish at Hollywood. I kinda liked it, and it was rather easy. I’d even taken it in Venice Junior High School. It was easy because so many of the signs and things in southern California—La Jolla and all—are Spanish.

So I got to Cal Christian. I did need some language more for UCLA or for college, so I took Spanish. And it was maybe third year or somethin’—second year. And I liked my Spanish teacher. He was an older man. He was—but then to me he was very old, but today I’d guess he was sixty—kind of heavy, and—but he had Spanish background; I think he was part Mexican—spoke beautifully. And he was a very conscientious teacher, which you’ve seen, you know. He really wanted us to go. So when I would do my classes good, he would just be so proud of me. And I would feel it, you know. And it got where I didn’t want to disappoint him, and my friends—I was still playin’ around, you know.

“What are you doin’?”

“I’m doin’ my Spanish.”

“Well, what are you doin’ that for?”

“Well, I don’t want to disappoint Professor Izguierda,” or whatever his name was.

So I was just super good in Spanish. And I loved it, and he liked me, and the more he liked me the harder I worked, and I just—.

So it came near the end of the year, they had a Spanish play, and the Spanish class put on the Spanish play. So I had the lead, and it worried me ‘cause I’ve always had trouble talking in public, so I died a thousand deaths. “Oh, gee whiz! I don’t want all those people lookin’ at me.” But because I wanted to please him and that I did know my subject, why I said I’d do it. So I had the lead, and there was, I think, three acts, and I was in every scene, every act, [laughing] and did most of the talking! And I learned—I knew my part, and I did it very well, too. I was real proud of myself. And my girlfriend Pacquita was my daughter in the play, which was fun. And then when we had it, why my folks all came to watch Bill. That was a great experience.

But then I think after Cal Christian, to get in, in the fall of ’30, to get in UCLA I needed one more what do they call ‘em—credit? So I went to UCLA in the summer school; I could get in the summer school. And I took earthquake, which was really interesting, and then some form of math that I just loved. And the earthquake was interesting, too. And still today I can talk about California earthquakes a little from just what I learned in that six-week summer school. I liked both my classes, so I got A’s in that. So then I had a running start at UCLA.

But by then I did—see, what was that—still playin’ around a little bit. And once I got in, then I kinda let down. I was in college, and I still didn’t know what direction I wanted to go. I started out mechanical engineer, which I liked. And the physics at UCLA I can still remember those. The physics out there were

unbelievable—almost like you’d see on outer space today—just things I didn’t know existed.

But my old bugaboo, chemistry—and I was way behind in chemistry. As you probably know, when you get behind in a subject and you don’t have the groundwork, then it’s pretty hopeless. And it was a must all the way, which—I said, “Well, you’re a mechanical engineer. Well, and metals have chemical properties; you would know which is right. You should know.” And because of that weak point, I was kind of losin’ heart cause I knew that. And I cheated on my chemistry, which got me behind; and I got caught, which I knew I was gonna. I really had about given up on it anyway—you know.

So about the same time I was really in a quandary. I thought “Well, I still love my math,” and I was still going at that. But I had no direction. And then I got into the Circle Game, which was kind of fun. When it did get semi successful in September. then, and I had to stay out of school, I was pleased that it didn’t bother me a bit to stay out and make a buck because I just wasn’t doin’ too good in my engineering career.

Well, tell about your beginnings, then, with the Circle Game. How did it get started? You had started to tell a little earlier about your father having the setup that you didn’t quite agree with.

Yeah. Well, the Depression hit and the panic in what was that—October, I guess, in ’29, and because of the trust deeds, business and the property values just fell terribly. So the fifty-thousand-dollar piece of property with the twenty-five-thousand-dollar mortgage with a five-thousand-dollar trust deed became a fifteen-thousand-dollar piece of property that my father owned with a twenty-five-thousand-dollar mortgage. So even if he—

and he tried to save; I remember how hard he worked. And he would maybe just give something away to get a little money to make the payments on this. But he and Johnny Moore had this property all over L.A.—I guess forty or fifty or eighty or something like that. I remember I'd been all over L.A. where he owned something.

So anyway, overnight he owed all this money, and it was just a tragedy. And he tried so hard to do it. So, eventually he lost everything—all of the property except our home. And all he had left was this lease (he didn't own it) on a building in Venice on the Venice pier right at the corner of the Ocean Front and Venice pier, which was a wonderful location. And he had to lease it. It was quite a large building with various concessions that faced on the oceanfront—that was a walk and a pier. It was the one around the corner. And like there was a hot dog stand and a shooting gallery and a little restaurant and a pool hall, and a milk bottle game where they threw the balls and hit the milk bottles, and various things like that.

And about the same time there were some vacancies. It was Depression. This was in '32. So I knew nothing; I was down there occasionally but not much. I didn't care for it any more cause Venice had kind of gone to pot. The Bingo games I'd heard of, and I wasn't too interested in that. But then there was this Circle Game, and it was in our building—or the building he had to lease. I'd forgotten that. And that was called—the Reno game was the name of the game; that's a coincidence. And it later became Circle, and it was then a very small room. And the man was doing pretty well; not too good, but he was makin' some money. My father was intrigued with the game. So he put one in; this wasn't talkin' to me much, just kind of second. He was [in] Venice and the game and all but no [discussion].

Then, how I happened to get in it, I think it was just I was lookin' for a summer job or something, and he said, "Well, hey, you want to work in the Circle Game?" And I went down, and it was within the week or two of opening, or month. Then [I] looked at the other one, the Reno game, which was doing—. And then I studied, of course. When I found I was goin' to work and got real interested in how it worked and all, then we did open. I hired Todd Brown and Brad Miller [chuckling] to work for me, and Harry Clamp—my buddies, none of which worked out very good, not because they were—that just wasn't their way to go. They were interested in other things.

But we opened on the Fourth of July, and it was not successful. The Reno game was successful. Then there was another one on the pier that had opened about the same time we opened, which was way out in a very poor location.

The reason the Circle Game wasn't too successful was we gave pots; we gave a carton of cigarettes or multiples of that, depending on how many players you had and how much money you took in. At that time a carton of cigarettes was worth a dollar and a quarter, so our games would be a dollar and a quarter, two and a half. Three seventy-five's a bum number, but five dollars would never be a big game. We sold playing cards, which I won't go into the details of the Circle Game. It was similar to Bingo, and you could play—it cost you twenty-five cents. You got five cards. Or you could play two sets, which was fifty cents. And you could win—it wasn't too smart playin' fifty cents to win a dollar and a quarter, but when we got up to two and a half or five, then a lot of people played two sets. And it was a fun game. You rolled a marble down, you hit your own number, and you drew playing cards. And you could, if you got lucky, you

could get a pair, which helped you, like in poker.

But it was a group game, and any group game, which a Bingo game is, if you have house players or shills, which are players that work for the house, only it's a big secret (only it really isn't a big secret), why, then they play when the play gets slow and the shills win the game, why, the house is protected, which is true, except the shills who play ruin the game. The people see shills in the game. And you fool the public for about two days or one day, why then they don't play with you any more. They don't like you; they say your game's crooked.

We had shills with my father's insistence. He thought that's the way you had to run. I had my school chums that would come down; I'd meet 'em around the corner, and I'd give 'em money to come in and play. Then we hired some local people; it just didn't work at all. We weren't foolin' anybody; we had to pay the shills. The Reno game had a few shills and they were doin' fair because they were the first one. But Carpenter—that's the one way out on the pier—he had a very nice, pretty game—terrible location—and he had no shills. And he was just doin' great. He had all the Circle-type game players in Venice playing with him because it was a square game, which I could see and anyone could see. And I showed it to my father, and he couldn't see it or just didn't want to see it. And I'd say—and we really had some talks. I said, "If we get rid of the shills, we're gonna do fine."

He said, "You get rid of the shills, you're gonna lose your shirt! Suppose you only have two players at twenty-five cents apiece; and you've given away a dollar and a quarter, you lose seventy-five cents a game," which is true.

But the point he missed is that other players walk by, and they see two players in there; and they know they're real players. They

say, "Wow! Let's get in this game," which is true with any Bingo game. Any Bingo player knows when there's a small crowd, the pots are just the same, you have a better chance, so they rush in and play. So it just takes care of itself.

He couldn't see that, and so it was really touch and go just to make a hundred dollars a week out of the darn thing by paying all the shills and everything. It was very—we had a lot of worries about it. And then finally, why the time came when he was fed up. And I was—we were gettin' in so—I don't know the exact words, but I did buy it from him for five hundred dollars and fired all the shills immediately—or just didn't fire 'em, just didn't rehire them—and ran the same game, the same location, and everything. And word got around instantly we had no shills.

And I remember the first day it was kind of scary. We had six players and seven players and eight players. But it didn't last too long, and we had ten players and fifteen players, and every player was a legitimate player. And so you were givin' away a dollar and a quarter, and you're takin' in two and quarter, why, you were makin' a dollar a game! And that was fun! I mean, when you had the shills, you had to keep track of who won what and all, and then straighten up later, and just all the complications. And this was just so simple: you ran the game and paid out so much, and you took in so much, and the difference was what you made. As we did have a pretty good location. Then it started to go, and it started makin' money.

And then I improved it. I bought some good stools [laughs]. It was about the first thing I did! And here and there, and I put in some drapes. There were no drapes. It was just an empty storeroom, like you'd take an old, abandoned cabinet shop and put a game in

it. And I put some drapes in and some pretty stools, and it didn't look too bad.

The first year it made—let's see, that was September of '32. The winter was a little scary because of the weather, but we went through the winter. I have a book somewhere that shows what we did, but I think we made around a hundred—hundred to two hundred dollars a week, and which was pretty good.

And then in the spring—I think January, February, or something—none of the games were legal. It was a "game of skill," and you had a license from the city of Los Angeles. It was a "game of skill" like a bottle game or anything—the same kind at a license—only it was called a Circle Game, or it was called—they didn't call it Bingo; they called it Tango.

But then you'd get an ex-district attorney runnin' f or reelection or something, he would—or the chief of police or someone would—close 'em up, and which they could do. And because they weren't really legal, they would arrest you on a gambling charge.

Well, they closed the Bingo games. There were a whole bunch by then in Venice and Ocean Park and Santa Monica and Redondo and Long Beach. At one time there were oh, twenty—well, at this time in '33, I guess it was, or '34—there were maybe twenty Bingo games operating in southern California, and they were all closed. And they tried to close us; and that's where my father came in, being a lawyer. And he—I remember they walked in, and he said, "What are you guys—crazy!" to the policemen.

They were shook up; they just thought we'd close up like everybody else did. And they said, "Well, yes. We're closin' all the Bingo games.

So my father said, "This is no Bingo game! This is no way a Bingo game!" And he had all the—and really threw at 'em. "We don't use baseballs; we use marbles. We don't use Bingo

cards; we use playing cards. Bla bla bla bla bla bla bla."

And you could see the police officers were taken aback. They just didn't know what to do! So they said, "Well uh, oh, uh, well, excuse us," or something. We'll go—we want to talk to—we want to make a phone call."

So we kept going. And then in the meantime there were politics involved. And my father made some connections. I know—not too familiar with what they were—not a big payoff or anything, but just some—he had some political friends over the years; and plus he was an excellent lawyer, plus he hired the best. He had [Harold Lee] Jerry Giesler, which was the best lawyer in southern California—maybe a little later down the road, but he got the very best. And he just buffaloed 'em with all his—you know—"I'll get a writ; I'll do this and that!" So they didn't close the Circle Game. And by then the Reno Game had closed, and I believe Carpenter had—guess he had—he'd closed because of his poor location when we started doin' good.

So for several months we had the only game operating in southern California, and it was open from—we kept our regular hours. We opened at, I think, one o'clock, and we ran till one o'clock—twelve hours—with our thirty stools. And it was full from the time we opened till we closed. And we didn't knock 'em off; we ran the proper games. The crowd'd get bigger, and more money came in. We played, but I remember we made—we did it three months—we made twenty-five thousand dollars or somethin'. It was just a whole new world, you know. But of course, by then everyone had—like the Robbins with their Bingo parlors—closed. They didn't like that at all. So they (which you can't blame 'em—I'd've done the same thing)—so then they opened, although they weren't the Circle. But they opened with marbles and with cards

and copied our game. And they opened, and others opened, and then gradually, why, it tell back. But I remember that one year, that year of I think it was '34, I made between twenty-five and fifty thousand dollars, which was an awful lot of money. So then when it got down to competitive—. In the meantime, there had been two Bingo parlors put in our building—or my father's building—or the building he had the lease on. There was a small Bingo parlor called Jones, a man named Jones. He'd had a chip game there which was a penny roulette game, which was semi-legal. But it kind of went out, and Bingo was in, so he put in this little Bingo game. He had it full of shills. It wasn't successful.

On the other side was the Plaza game, which my father had an interest in with a man named—can't remember. That was a big game. That was almost competitive with Robbins—not as good, but pretty good. And they used shills—the same old thing—and it wasn't too successful. And then they got closed, and then the other Bingo parlors got closed. But with the stake I got with the twenty-five to fifty thousand there, I bought out Jones and took out the shills, and it was an instant success just by taking the shills out and cutting the price of the cards.

And then the Plaza—the big one—it was two for a dime. The biggest places were ten cents a card, but Plaza was two for a dime. And it was very nice—nice drapes, nice stools, and no shills there. And it was a—it wasn't an overnight success, but it was successful. There was a bigger game; it was a little tougher to get goin'. But within the year we had the—or I had the Circle Game and the Vogue—I changed the Jones place to the Vogue just 'cause it was a name. And the Plaza was already named. I left that name. So then I had three of them. And they went quite well. Makin' money. By then, the Circle wasn't classed by itself; it was

just another game. So then when they closed them again, everything went, includin' the Circle. And that happened over and over, and it just got where it was—that's when I started thinkin' of other places.

So it was difficult, which—it was political. If the district attorney said you could run, you ran; and if he didn't, why you didn't. And for years I've kind of blamed it on Santa Anita racetrack. And I have no proof, except Santa Anita always opened on Christmas Day and ran for two or three months. And we usually closed, and we got open with chips and with darts and with balls, and we'd change the game, and we'd get open again. And we'd take it to the police commission and get an okay and get our license and open up. And then we'd get closed, and we changed the game and opened again—on and on—three or four times.

But around the middle of December, the twentieth of December, we'd get closed. And it was never directly Santa Anita, but, you know, *post hoc ergo propter hoc*, or whatever it is. By then we had a mailing list, and we'd get Christmas presents prepared for our players and all, invite them down, and then we'd be closed.

The real sad thing was our help, which my father could never understand. Help to him were just like apples or somethin': you needed a dozen, you went and bought a dozen. And but then again, help isn't that way. They have to be good, and they have to make a living, and you just can't put 'em out of work. But he could never see that at all. Just when we opened up, he said, "Get some help." And when we closed up, "Pay 'em off," you know. And like they were walnut pickers or somethin'. And it just didn't work, and it was oh, extremely difficult. That's another reason. We got up to fifty, sixty players with the three games, and that's when Bob Ring

was in the picture. He was very helpful. And we'd get all lined up and get our help all lined up. And then we'd get goin'-. Some people weren't so good, and we'd make changes and get goin'. Then we'd get closed up. And that would always look like you're goin' to open next week. And so a guy'd say, "Gee, I can go to work for Douglas."

And I'd say, "No, wait, wait, wait, wait! We're gonna open next week."

And well, you know, "I haven't anything to eat."

"Okay, here's five dollars."

So you try to keep sixty people, you know, ready; so when you open tomorrow, you have sixty people with nothing sure. It's very difficult. And that was a big headache, really, it was just awful.

And then when I came to Reno, which was just on a spree—no thought of goin' into business—and I saw they were runnin' here year and year out, I thought, "Gee, that looks good." But how I came up here was with some school chums again. And—well, no, that's kind of an interesting story. I was goin' with a girl that worked in the game, who I later married—Thelma. And some old friends from Hollywood High School was Noah Dietrich's daughters. And there was Kay and Elizabeth. And I was a good friend of Noah Dietrich's. He was a super guy.

But Kay Dietrich was goin' with a boy named Johnny O'Hara, who—let's see, this is '36, we came; I'm gettin' down the road a little, but—no, '37. But how I came to Reno—we were still runnin' the games and gettin' closed—runnin' the game, gettin' closed. But in '37 we were closed, and we were all good friends, and Johnny was a fraternity brother at UCLA, and he was Kay's boyfriend. And we'd all double-date all the time. So we're double-datin', and Kay's mother—what was

her name? Noah and—she was a wonderful lady.

She and Noah had split. And she'd come—it was a big shock—"The Dietrichs are separated! Wow!" So she came to Reno; came to Reno for a divorce. And Kay and Elizabeth came with her, and they stayed at the Golden Hotel. And she got her divorce, but then Elizabeth was talkin' about Reno—how neat Reno was, and da da da da da.

And I said, "Well, I've been to Reno. I was there with Brad and the Model T."

"Well, you haven't seen it lately. They got all the gamblin'; they got Bingo, they got this and that. And oh, it's fun."

So this vacation, we all had a little money, and we came to Reno—four of us. And I remember that just like it was yesterday. I had my Lincoln Zephyr and drove up and parked right out in front of the—. We got into Reno—and, "So this is Reno." And, see, that was—I don't think Harolds Club was open—there was an old—you remember—the Block N and that stuff. Well, right next to that there was a bar—a real cheesy bar. That's in the book somewhere. We went in there, and it was terrible—I mean bum liquor, you know, and just bum atmosphere. And we said, "Wow, this is Reno?"

So then we went around to the Golden Hotel, and we got rooms, and we went in the bar there, and it was a different world. There was a bartender there, I think named Howard Leavitt or something. But three bartenders I got to know over the years very well. And he was just so—everyone was so nice to us at the Golden bar. So oh, it was a different, different thing.

So Johnny later became a doctor; he was a wonderful old guy. But he couldn't gamble worth a darn—never could his whole life. He died. And he and I had an agreement when we left L.A. I think we each had two hundred

and fifty, or maybe five hundred dollars. So we agreed we'd just—nobody would worry—like you're havin' dinner, somebody would pay—no big deal. You're havin' drink, somebody would pay. And when we got back to L.A., if we had any money left, we'd split. And if one guy got broke, the other fellow'd give him some money and no counting—just give him some money.

So we came up, and we went in the Golden. And then I think we went to the Bank Club—or maybe we went to the Bank Club first—and just got up to the bar, and Johnny was over in the Crap game, and he didn't lose his full five hundred, but most of it. And before we went to bed, he'd lost all his money. He always did. He was very unlucky, and he did everything wrong—one of those kind of guys. So I gave him some money, and then it got to be a joke; only Johnny didn't think it was too funny.

But we were here for three or four days, and we ate, we went to the Town House, and big dinners. And everywhere we went—fancy dinners, stayed at the Golden, had nice rooms, and drank all the time, and tipped everybody. And I kept givin' Johnny money—givin' it to him. And when we got back to L.A., I think we—I had—or between us—say we started—I think a thousand is too much. It was more like six hundred, three hundred apiece. And I think when we got back to L.A., we had five or six hundred dollars between the two of us. And we spent a lot of money and then just had a wonderful time. So I remember talking—or all of us, you know: "That's a place! Look at that; they don't close the bars, and they don't close the games, and they leave you alone, and, you know, the police were nice—everybody was so nice." And no penny ante laws like they had—two o'clock if you didn't close your bar; it was a big thing in California. We just loved it.

And there were Bingo parlors here, of course; and I looked at them, and I thought, "Gee whiz, I wish I'd've gotten one of those. But it's too late. You know, I should have been here last year." And there was one that opened where the Reno Print is. And they had just opened, and they seemed to be doing quite good. And then there was the Reno Club, which was a Japanese place. And there was a Fortune Club, and there was the Heart Tango. And that was it. And there was one on commercial Row that was just limp'in' along. I could see that was no good. And then this one down here; that one closed. But anyway the one Center Street looked pretty good. And then we went back to L.A., and then within a month I got a letter from somebody that wanted to know if I was interested in that place that had closed up. And it was a real nice-lookin'-'-nice fixtures. And I said, "Wow! For sale?" Yeah, it was for sale. So I came up and bought it real cheap not knowing it was a terrible location. And that's a whole long story.

GAMBLING IN RENO, 1937-1946

In September [we] opened in [Venice] '32, July Fourth and—let's see, how old was I? Twenty. Yeah, that's right. Yeah, I remember. September, I was twenty-one, I remember. That was very impressive to me being twenty-one, which was kinda funny. I was always interested in politics—well, my father was in politics—not that I wanted to be, but—you know. And so this was '32, and I was twenty-one in September, which was just as close as you can get that I could register. And I voted my first time in November of '32. And I remember I voted for Herbert Hoover [laughing]. And then I voted—my father was a Republican; and I was, of course. So then it was Hoover and then—who's the next Republican? Landon, Willkie, and who was that mayor of New York—Dewey. I voted for every one of 'em. And then, 'course, I voted for Eisenhower; and he got elected, and I couldn't believe [laughing]! I was so excited—"My God! I got a winner!" [Chuckles]

In May of '37, [I] came up, looked around and then the one Bingo parlor—and then later I got word that it was closed and for sale,

and I came up and made a deal on it. And I remember—yes—oh, what was his name? Oh, Bob Douglass. The collector of internal revenue, yeah, in the post office building. He was the landlord. And he had a lot of clout politically. So I needed a license—there was just nothing there. I just got a license. I don't know, he might have got it for me, which it was no big deal in those days. But I remember I liked Bob very much. He was a car guy, and he was very friendly. He kinda liked me, maybe because I was a car guy.

But he was goin' to Carson one time, and he had a new Ford, and Fords would go pretty good—there he took delivery up here at Lovelock's. That's when they were up here, you know—well, they still are [chuckles]—"And he's goin' with me. I gotta go to Carson."

And so I went with him, and we got this new Ford—two miles on it. And as we drove it out, Lovelock or whoever said, "Bob, da da da," and then he turned to me. And he says, "You know Bob Douglass and how he drives?"

And I said, "Well, I've heard."

He said, "Well, he believes in flat out all the time. This is a brand-new car, and it should be broken in. He's not gonna do it, so would you—he's gonna say he's gonna, but I know he won't—would you kinda remind him on the way to Carson?"

I said, "Okay, sure."

So we started out; and as soon as we got out of town, it was ninety miles an hour.

And I said, "Oh, Mr. Douglass, Mr. Lovelock—

He said, "Oh, the hell with Mr. Lovelock!"

And I said, "Yeah, but a new car—it should be broken in a little." I knew somethin' about cars.

He said, "Nah, nah, these Fords," he said, "they're built pretty loose," which some of 'em are.

And I said, "Well, yeah, but it might freeze up on you," which means it gets hot and blows up.

And he said, "Oh, what the hell if it does; I'll get another one."

But it didn't. It just ran beautifully to Carson and back. And he was going to see the governor, which I'd never met the governor. And I forget who the governor was then. But anyway he went in and walked right in on the governor, and said, "This is Bill Harrah. He's a tenant of mine in Reno."

"Oh, how do you do? How do you do?"

And Bob says to the governor and me, he said, "I have to run down the hall for somethin'. You guys get along.

So here am I twenty years old or somethin', and my governor is sittin' there; and I thought, "What the hell do you say to the governor?" [Laughing] But he was really nice. I wish I could remember his name.

I think it was [Kirman]. But he went out of his way; he could see that I was uneasy, and he was just so nice. So fifteen minutes—or it was twenty minutes you know. And I got to

be kind of comfortable. Mr. Douglass came back; I wasn't dyin' like I thought I would.

But somethin' Mr. Douglass did that was awfully nice. When I got the place, I bought the previous owner out. And I got the lease on the place, which was a short lease, but it was maybe two or three years to go. And I think it was two hundred or two hundred and fifty dollars a month.

Then we closed it up, and I continued to pay the rent and then bought another place, which I'll go into; but this is a Bob Douglass item.

So I got the other place and moved equipment and all, so all I had was a vacant building there that I was payin' two hundred dollars or two-fifty. So I went to him, and he's the kind you could call up. And I went to see him, and I said, "Mr. Douglass, as you know, I moved 'cause the location—" I said, "Good location but not for Dingo," da da da da.

He said, "How ya doin'?"

I said, "Pretty good."

He said, "That's fine."

And I said, "I've been lookin'—and I advertised it for rent." I said, "I've been lookin' for a tenant to sublet it." I said, "I haven't been able to find one. But," I said, "I'm doin' the best—I'm not goofin' off. I'm doin' the best I could."

And he says, "Oh hell, Bill." He said, "You didn't do any good there." He said, "You've been real good." He said, "You don't have to pay us." He said, "Let's just tear up the lease," which he did, which was very nice.

Yeah, he was a classy guy. He knew when we started the Horseless Carriage Club here. He was so interested in old cars that we followed up—we were friends for years—not real close, but we liked each other. He had pictures, and there are pictures in the Sunday supplement sometimes of Bob Douglass and

his Stutz Bearcat. And they had races around here in the old days, and Bob won a lot of 'em.

I remember one time he told—I think we went to Sacramento once for some reason cause he was real big politically.

Anyway I think we went to Sacramento once—yeah, we did— to see the governor, I guess. But anyway, when we were goin' over the mountain and we passed the sheds that the trains run in, you know, and I'd heard about somethin' that he'd had an accident up there one time. So I had read that he had wrecked his car up there in the tunnel—the train. And so I knew him well enough then when I said, "What happened?"

He said, well, they had a road race from Sacramento to Reno, or Reno to Sacramento. And so he was in that. They got up on top of the mountain, and he was doin' good, and this unexpected snow came, so the road was filled—of course, there were no snow plows or anything—but it was impassable. And he wanted to win that race; that was important. So he got on the railroad tracks and went along and through the tunnel or the—what do they call it—the snow shed.

Yeah. And [chuckles] a train came along and goin' the other way—a freight or something. And so Bob jumped out of the Bearcat and hid behind something. And 'course the train hit the car and ruined it. And it stopped the train and everything—big excitement and all. Bob wasn't hurt at all.

And so everybody's all excited and big news. And the railroad, of course, was pretty put out about it. And they started fussin' with Bob, So he sued 'em for wreckin' his Stutz Bearcat [laughing], which he told me—he said, "Well, I sued the bastards for wreckin' my car!" He was a fun man,

But anyway, then we moved to—let's see, the Bingo parlor on—there was one on Commercial Row next to the Wine House, but

it was real shaky. And when we opened over there, it was—we took just enough business that it put them out of business.

They were runnin on a real shoestring. So we knew them somehow, and we bought their lease. And why, I don't know. It just looked better than the other one, I think, and maybe to get the equipment. Maybe for six hundred dollars, we got the place or something, and just two of us. You know, money wasn't very big then.

Anyway, we got it, and we closed over a year, and it was fall. I knew when there was snow on the ground, it was very bad. So then that winter, I spent the winter tryin' to raise some money, which I did a little bit, and moving the equipment from Center Street to Commercial Row. So then in May or June we reopened on Commercial Row. And that was called—I think we called it the Plaza Tango. And the reason we called it Plaza was we had a Plaza game in Venice, and we had the deck of Bingo cards that said "Plaza" on them; and I discovered that Commercial Row on the other side is called "The Plaza"—Plaza Street, I guess. So it kind of gave me an excuser and it saved some money. So we opened there, and by then, we'd learned quite a bit.

When we opened, there was the Fortune Club which was two cards for a dime. It was on the corner over there. That was Joe Zemansky. And then there was the Reno Club, which was where Harolds Club is now. In tact it was 232 North Virginia; I can remember that. That was the Japanese. Freddie Aoyama was the manager. He's still in Reno. And I forget the owners. They owned Bingo parlors all over the West. They had 'em in Venice and Santa Monica and all, and I knew them from down there. They were pretty good operators. There was the Reno Club and the Fortune Club. They were two for a dime. And then the Heart

Tango, which was also where Harolds Club is now—it was right second from the corner—that was two for a nickel.

So when I opened on Commercial Row, we went two for a nickel, six for a dime, which was an old gimmick we learned at the beach, which worked real good. And of course, the hot cards don't cost you any more, and you have plenty of cards. And it's a big attraction. Nobody ever plays two for a nickel; they play six cards for a dime. And Howe, who had the Heart Tango, he stayed for two for a nickel, which was kind of a mistake. So we competed with him. And we kinda had a "Bingo war," gave pretty good pots. It wasn't a real crazy war, but it was just—we went strong, and we gave drawings, and we did all sorts of things. And we increased our business pretty good.

I remember I read Mr. Ring's thing [oral history], and we opened in June or July; and Mr. Ring didn't open it, but I had a very unsatisfactory manager here. Mr. Ring was still in Venice; we had some things down there, and they closed up. So Bob came up here, and it was—he came up in the summer of '38—has been here ever since.

That was October or something. We're still bangin' away, and there was no heat in the building, which our competitor knew. So then we had to watch our money. So we got the heating people, and we—'course in those days we did it all ourselves. You called, and I could even see what the guy looked like. But he did a lot of work for us later that was in heating and that kind of work.

So he came by—"Well, what can we get?"

"Well, you can get just a heater in the corner for," you know, "thirty dollars, and you get this and that. But you can get a furnace—basement, the whole bit, for six hundred," or nine hundred," or something.

"Ooh, that's a lot of money!"

"Well, you don't have to pay it all at once."

But it was a first-class job. So we bought it, and I'm sure Ring was in on the decision, or at least the thinking behind it. And it was that we did need heat, and we wanted it—you know—we wanted the people to be comfortable. They're not gonna play if they're not comfortable. And also, while there wasn't the psychology of getting Howe out because we weren't that far along, it did work that way because we got a feedback. You know, the kids would all see the other dealers and drink together and all. And we got word back right away that Howe was surprised when we bought this heater that boy, we were in business. So he had to take us seriously, which he did.

Then we competed with Howe very strongly all winter. And I didn't tell you about his selling out? Well, see, I had so many interviews with these newspapers, forget who I've talked to.

We opened on Halloween in '37. And I'd looked at the other parlors here, and they ran—well, at the beach we ran five-dollar games, ten-dollar games, and fifteen-dollar games at two for a dime. And you'd run—your regular schedule was two fives and a ten, two fives and a fifteen. You just ran that continuously.

And up here the same places, they were running six-dollar games at two for a dime. But they ran maybe six or eight six-dollar games; and then they'd run a ten, maybe, or a fifteen. It wasn't exact. So being from out of town and being a kind of a know-it-all, maybe, I thought, "Well, that's a dumb way to run a Bingo parlor. We'll run the way we do." And we did: two fives and a ten, two fives and a fifteen. So we did. We tried it that way, and it didn't work. The Reno players were used to the six-dollar games they liked. And five isn't six, and then they would complain about it. "Why don't you—?"

“Why? We were runnin’ a ten every couple of—.”

“Oh, poohy on that. Just run—.”

And so we were a little stubborn about it, maybe longer than we should be. We stayed with our fives and our tens. And then we had the markers, which I still prefer the fact we made round markers, that just fit perfect. And they used lima beans here, and the old customers were used to the beans. And, in fact, they used to—”Why don’t you use beans?”

“Well, we like the markers better.”

And ‘course, we were outside to start with, you know; and they were lookin’ at us—”Who are you guys?” Plus the fact that it got to be the point where we did develop a few regular customers because the business was so lousy, they couldn’t help winning and makin’ some money. But they’d bring their own beans! They’d bring [laughs] a whole box of beans and push ours away and put ‘em on there.

But anyway, we opened up; and it wasn’t good at all—just bad right from the start—bad, bad, bad. And I’d go around look at the Jap’s, I always called it (the Reno Club). And the Fortune’s right across. Fortune didn’t do too good. They didn’t run it as well as the Japs ran theirs. But the Fortune would have a pretty good crowd, and I’d think, “Well, I wonder how it is on Virginia Street.” And I’d go over and look, and they’d have a good crowd. And I remember saying, “The place to have a Bingo parlor in Reno is on Virginia Street,” ‘cause head for head, the Reno Club, which was the name of the one on Virginia Street, was always ahead of the Fortune. And I credited location ‘cause the Fortune Club was a beautiful place, but it was also managed by what’s pretty bad—the Fortune.

But anyway, we ran—October thirty-first—we lasted six weeks, which is the middle of December. And we were losing

money just about every day. And I didn’t have a big bank roll at all, so I would either go to L.A. to get money, or I’d call my father and he’d wire me some. He didn’t have much. He’d get it here and there, you know, two hundred dollars at a time. And it’s actually a—Mr. Ring may have told you that there were days we opened at two o’clock, I think; and it’d be noon or one o’clock we’re waitin’ for the wire from L.A. to get the two hundred dollars that we can open up with. But we never missed an opening. We always—but it was scrapin’ pretty hard.

Then there’s a lot of funny stories, too, like one time Mr. Ring—he was very ingenious. And one time when I was somewhere—I might’ve been out drinkin’ or somethin’ and not payin’ attention—and he didn’t have any money, and we had a couple of slot machines in the place. They weren’t set to play; they were just there, you know, like some slot machines still are where they’re just—you know, on your way out you put a nickel in, but nobody stands and plays them. But they would pick up a few nickels and dimes. And anyway, he robbed the slot machines, as we say. He emptied them and changed it into money, so we could open up. He was super in those days— well, he still is.

But anyway, it was real bad; but then when that opened, we advertised a lot and all. So this little place that was real shaky over there next to the Wine House, which then he was just on a shoestring—so we opened, he didn’t last three days; he just closed. And it became for sale for six hundred or whatever, and we bought it and then moved.

How did you advertise?

In the newspaper, yeah.

That was kind of an innovation at that time.

Yeah, a little bit. They advertised, but mostly courtesy ads. But then we advertised, yeah. And you put signs in your windows; you'd have like a grocery store that you have somebody make the signs. But it was fun. It was—I mean a lot of worries, but you know, you're young, you're hustlin', and drinkin' a little bit.

I was convinced without any question as soon as I saw Reno that—and we did know how to run a Bingo parlor; if we got the right location, no reason we couldn't operate. So it was just a question of getting the location. And I didn't realize—which is very difficult in a new city. Oh, I don't care if you're in the theater business or gas station business or whatever. There's a pattern there, and it looks so great; and you—"Oh, gee, look at this lot!"—and you go grab it. And all those stations are over here; and when you find there's a reason there, or the people are used to going there. It's, you know, you can't beat a newcomer. And of course, sometimes a newcomer can see a lot of things the old-timers can't see. They just got blind from—you know. But also you got to respect—there is a way that town is laid out. There's a reason for it. And you better really study that before. Just don't go in—"Oh my God, here's a vacant lot! Let me grab it!" You can sure get fooled.

Well, then we opened, and we competed very strongly with the Heart Tango and Ed Howe. And we counted his players; he didn't pay too much attention to us, but then he was very independent. But then there was a Tom Smith, which was his manager there—a nice fellow. He became a friend of mine. And Tom would—well, I gotta meet Tom after work. And it was oh, maybe kind of secretive, but not too much—like we'd go across the street and drink or somethin'. And he and I were friends— or became friends—and Ed Howe didn't really have any friends. But I cultivated

Tom, but Tom was—it's a funny story. He never really worked for us in the pit, as we say. He worked for us in Bingo for a while, but then he moved around.

But for the last ten, fifteen years he's worked for us in Las Vegas, and he's our—what do you call 'em? There's a word for it. And he just fits in perfectly. He loves the job. He goes to all the hotels in Vegas and all the downtown, which is a lot of 'em now. And he sends a daily report on how the new Bingo's doin' and how they're doin', or how the new show at the Caesar's is and how many people Frank Sinatra had last night, and really a very—he loves it.

Kind of an intelligence report.

Yeah. He's kind of a snoopy guy, anyway. Everybody likes him 'cause he's friendly, and he kids around a little bit. And he goes around, and it's very valuable. For a while there some of the guys wanted to discontinue it. They said, "What's—" you know, "that's a friend of yours. You're just tryin' to help him out."

And I said, "Well, boy, you're not readin' those good," which they weren't. And then maybe we directed him a little better. But like a new star will open; you see 'em on TV, and oh, they're pretty good, but how will they do in nightclub? It's not the same. So ninety-nine times out of a hundred— except for maybe John Denver or someone—they opened in Vegas. And so we have a perfect showcase. So they open in Vegas, and we get a report—but it's in the paper, of course. But usually [a] newspaper review s written either very negative or very friendly—and not necessarily that's the way the show was—but the reporter, which you have to admit will happen, is the friend of the owner or something. So it's—you know, it's the stinkin' act. But he

can't say "stinkin'" so he says, "Oh, it's—" you know—"da da da da da."

But Tom Smith says it was stinkin', you know. So II laughs]— and they're lookin' around for somebody else and all that. So he's extremely valuable that way.

It's always fun to see a person that's in a job that they like. And he was married; his wife died. He's alone now. And he's as old as I am, or maybe a little older. But he's bustin' around that Strip and then got his little counter in his pocket, and he has a little spending money—not a lot— but he knows every maitre d' and every captain; and he can actually get (I don't know if we should put that—). Well, information that I don't think they'd want us to know, we're getting. He's—but all those years—what is that? 'Thirty-eight to '77—.

Do the other casino owners keep people out like that?

They do a little, but I don't know if anybody does it as extensive. We do it in Reno, too, of course. We do it at Tahoe. And we have a daily, and it's always the same time so that there's no—you know, you can't do—we've had 'em doin' hit or miss. So yesterday they had a hundred slot players, and today they had two-fifty. "Well, gee whiz, look at that! What happened?" But this was at ten in the morning and noon or so, you know. So we have to—you have to do it right. So we do it. I don't know if there's any people do it as thoroughly as we do, but there may be.

And we check the Sahara at the Lake, and they have stars up there that sometimes won't play Vegas. And we get an instant feedback; we have a real good man up there. And well, like quite often, Sahara's gone into—well, they try everything, which is okay. I believe in tryin' things. But they will hire rock groups (and you know what they are) and they will

fill the theater restaurant or almost fill it—thousand—but they're teenagers. And so they—I guess they charge 'em; maybe they make money on 'em. But the casino dies; it just—. And they will actually run the good players out. But we get an instant feedback. Then there are some names that we never thought of playing, and they will play 'em, and then we've checked, and nine times out of ten, it is a bunch of kids.

But we competed with Howe and ran stronger, and we got stronger and stronger. And Tom would tell me—he was workin' for Howe. So he was loyal there. He would tell me a little bit, maybe a little more than he should, but he still wouldn't tell me everything I wanted to know. But he would tell me a little about Howe's moods and all and that he—I think that's where I got the feeling he wanted to get away—'cause he'd made money. He'd run his place real good for ten years or so. And I found out, and it may have been from Tom—. I was getting ready to negotiate—or I wanted to buy him out, but I didn't have any money. But if I could get the Heart Tango, then I had it made.

So I thought about it an awful lot. And I'm not sure of the sequence, but I believe that talkin' to Tom, I learned that the old man didn't really like the Bingo or competition. See, before, he'd had the only two-for-a-nickel in town, and he just had it his own way. And now he had some competition, some serious competition. And it was hard work, and he had to kinda change things, and we ran longer hours, he had to run longer hours. And it just wasn't—he didn't like it.

And then I learned somehow that he had been thinkin' about retiring, and he was the kind of man that couldn't leave, It was his place, and he couldn't delegate. So in ten years, he'd never taken a day off—one of those kind

of people, you know. He didn't really trust anybody. So you imagine after say ten—may have been fifteen or maybe eight years—but work every day for that long that you're gonna be up to here.

So he bought this trailer. That's when they first started making real fancy trailers, and it was—when I'd learned what kind it was, I was taken back on my heels 'cause it was an extremely expensive trailer. Maybe it was only ten thousand dollars then, but it was a super—you know—thirty feet or something. So then he had this, and he wanted to go; and he couldn't go because he was tied up with the place. So it was just—you can kinda get the picture, he wanted to get away.

So anyway I finally went to see him. And I called him up—and it took a lot of nerve—but I called him up.

“Ed, Bill Harrah. Can I see you?”

And he said, “Sure, Bill! Can you come over in an hour?”

I said, “All right.”

So I went over, and he had a little bitty office, and it was in this storeroom, and there's a stairway—went upstairs—the hotel upstairs—and o' course, the stairway cut into the room a little bit. He had a little office under the stairs which was pretty good, but you had to go in and sit down [ducks] as you went in, you know. But I remember it, I walked in there, and everybody was amazed to see me. And then when Ed and I went into his office, why, word was “bzz bzz bzz”—all the dealers and all the customers, too. “What's goin' on?”

So I sat down, and “Ed, nice to meet you,” da da da. And I said, “Would you consider selling this place?”

And he said, “Oh,” he said, “I don't know.” He played it pretty cool. He said, “I don't know.” He said, “I do pretty good here.” And he said, “I don't know, I don't know.” tie said, “Well, let me think about it.”

So “Okay.” So I was going to see him the next day or something.

So I went to see him. “You want to sell it?”

“Yeah, I'll sell it. Twenty-five thousand dollars.”

And so I said, “Oooh, oooh.” And I was never too good; why, I'm a lot better now at negotiating right from scratch without thinkin'. So I said [deep voice], “Well uh, I'll have to think about that.”

So I left. And I remember I went across the street to the—can't remember the name of the bar. Bob Ring would remember. That's where we hung out. And I sat at the bar, and I started drinkin'; and I thought, “Gee, that's terrible. If I could just get that place, I'd have it”—you know. And “Darn guy,” and “it's his place. He can ask what he wants for it, but if he just would sell it. He can't make any money there with us runnin'.” And if he'd just sell it to us at a low price and we could close the other one, we could move in there and run it. I could make—we could all make some money. He'd be down in Arizona with his trailer; he'd be happy. And just the only problem to the whole scenario is his twenty-five-thousand-dollar price.”

So I don't know if it was that day or the next day—I'm not sure—but I was drinkin' real good. (That's the wrong word—heavy. But still in those days when you're young, you can drink an awful lot and still think and walk and everything.) And I drank and drank, and I got my nerve up, and I called Ed up, and I said (I was kind of tough, too)—I said [gruff voice], “Ed. Bill Harrah. Can I see ya?”

And he said, “Yeah, come on over.”

So I went over, and boy I was—and I'd really gotten kinda mad at Ed because of my thinkin': if he'd just go sell me his place and go pull his trailer, and I could, you know—he's stoppin' me. It's almost like he was selfish.

So I went over, and I went under the stairs with him; and I says, “Okay, Ed, I've thought

about.” And I said, “I’m not gonna give you twenty-five thousand dollars for this place.” I said, “I’m gonna give you three”—which took a lot of nerve! “And it’s not gonna be cash; it’s gonna be a thousand dollars down, a thousand dollars in thirty days, and a thousand dollars in sixty days.” And I really thought he’d throw me out.

And he says, “Hmm, hmm.” He says, “Let me think about it.” [Chuckles]

So I thought, “Oh-oh.” I said, “Okay. When can I call?”

He said, “Call me tomorrow.”

So I said, “Okay.”

So I went out, and I thought, “Gee whiz, he didn’t throw me out! At least he’s thinkin’ about it.”

So I called him the next day. And I called him at—I restrained myself. I didn’t call at six in the morning; I waited till about one o’clock or somethin’, and I called him. He answered and he said, “Come on over.”

So I went over, and he said—he didn’t ask for more. He said, “Yeah, I think that’s okay. That’s a deal.” And he said, “Who’s your lawyer?”

And I didn’t have a lawyer then, and there was—. (Hmm, what’d I do? Oh yeah, that was how it happened.) Bob Douglass’s attorney was William McKnight. And I got acquainted with William McKnight through Bob Douglass, and then McKnight became my attorney. That was it.

Okay, so we went to McKnight, which was fine with Ed. He didn’t—I said, “Do you have a lawyer?”

And he said, “Yeah.”

And I said, “Well, mine’s McKnight.”

Then he said, “Oh, I know—” was it Bill McKnight?

He says, “Well, he’s good enough for me.” He said, “You don’t need my lawyer; let’s just go see Bill.”

So Ed and I went up to Bill McKnight—and that was across the street upstairs—and went in there—”Okay, a thousand dollars now, a thousand dollars in thirty days, a thousand dollars in sixty days.

So McKnight said—he said, “This is a little awkward representing both parties. But,” he said, “I’ll keep it straight.” So he said—and he turned to me—”Bill,” he said, it’s not to your advantage. This is to Ed’s. But,” he said, “I have to ask what’s the security for this three—you’re payin’ a thousand dollars down. What’s the security for the two thousand dollars?”

And of course, I didn’t have anything, and I went, “Ooh, uh, mm.”

And I’ll never forget—Ed spoke up and said, “Oh hell, Bill,” meaning Bill McKnight, he said, “He doesn’t need any security.” He said, “When he gets this place, he’s gonna close his other one, and he’s gonna make it three times over.” He said, “No problem. Just leave it out.” So he left out—which really—you know, I—. Of course, I liked him very much for sellin’ it to me for that price; but I never forgot how nice he was on that ’cause he could have screwed it up. But he just wanted to get out of town so bad.

So I think we signed the papers; I paid the thousand, and then I took over the next day, something like that. And he was of f in his trailer—just “good-bye.” And then we did all that we planned to do. We closed the other place, and this was instant money. And then we fixed it up. He had crummy little stools, and we put nice stools in; and the whole thing went again. And we made money just from Day One there.

I’m tryin’ to think of the landlord’s name. Oh—Mark Yori. He was a funny old guy! And he was our landlord on Commercial Row in that little—next to the Wine House, he was the landlord. And Bob Ring used to get the biggest kick out of him because the first of the

month the rent was due, and Mr. Yori would be there. Not the second, he was there the first. And of course, I guess he figured we maybe weren't gonna make it. But Bob was always a kidder, and so he would— I remember he would get Mr. Yori so we would be in like—we opened at two o'clock, so we'd get there maybe at one to, you know, get it ready to—maybe one-fifteen sometimes. And no matter when we got there, Mr. Yori'd be waiting at the door. So we, then—Bob Ring'd usually unlock it, but I was around, of course. And he'd say, "Oh, hello, Mr. Yori! I-low are you?"

He said, "da da da da," and he wouldn't know it, and Bob would have the check. And "so on, so on," and do everything else, you know. Mr. Yori'd just stand there.

And he would finally get everything done, but there's nothing else, and Bob would go over to him: "Oh, Mr. Yori—" shake hands again or somethin'—"nice of you to come out. Anything we can do for you?" [Laughs]

Mr. Yori—"My rent! My rent!"

And Bob—"Oh, that! Oh, yeah!" And then he'd—oh, he'd really put—and then he'd go in the office alone and fumble through the drawers and try and—you know-.-"Hey Bill, where's the rent?"

Then I got in on it, you know. "What rent?" [laughing] I says to Yori.

Then we moved around, and it was the Chase Building there. But Mr. Yori—he owned about every other piece of property in town. And I knew that because about every place—and I'd looked at other locations, and Yori was always the landlord. So I'd go in to see him; I got to know him pretty good. His office was down in the next block on Commercial Row. He owned the whole block.

So I went—when we moved around to Howe and bought him out—. So then Chase owned the building, but Yori was the agent. So then you had to deal with Yori. And I

remember I spent so much time 'cause Yori was as slow as molasses—was the slowest man I ever saw. And no matter whether it was his property or someone [else's], he wanted every dime he could get. And he didn't like long leases. He wanted to be able to raise the rent. So I think at the Heart Tango there, we'd get three years—was all we could get. And it got to be—I think we were there quite awhile—or maybe two years. I'd get a lease and agree upon—then it'd take about a year before I'd actually get the lease in my hand. But after I got the new lease, it was agreed upon.

Then I would start working on an extension. I knew that much. So, like say it was two years; and maybe after the second month, I would—"Mr. Yori, I want to see you."

"Okay." And I'd go over to his little hotel there and go upstairs; he had a little office, and I went in. I said, "I gotta have a longer lease now."

And he said, "Well, you just got a lease."

"Well, yeah, but I gotta have—gee whiz, you know. I want to know what's—." That's the story that you tell your landlords, and nobody ever believes it. It's that you're gonna remodel, you're gonna do this, you're gonna do that. I said, "I have to do that and that and that in order to get my money back. I have to have a longer lease," you know.

"Well, let me think about it."

And I would—all those years I saw Mr. Yori at least two or three times a month just tryin' to get the lease. And so finally we would—like I had two years to go, and maybe it'd take me a year and a half to finally agree upon a two-year extension. And then it would take another six months to a year to actually get the extension in writing in my hand. And then I'd start again, So it was just a constant—. And I remember saying to myself and probably Bob Ring, "If I can ever get a long lease or own the property, am I

gonna do it.” It just was that I was neglecting my business, really—. That was a real good lesson there, learning that.

But anyway, we were there some time, and next door was the Reno Club, the Jap’s place. Then there was another one up a little ways—Robbin’s. They had one there; they didn’t amount to much. They kinda came late. And then there was the Fortune Club, and then there was one over there on the corner that a fellow from south of Long Beach—there were Bingo parlors all through southern California by then. And I knew where they all were; it was my business. So I went around and looked at ‘em, and I met a lot of the owners. I didn’t go in, but I just—you got acquainted, you know, one way or the other like “where do you buy your cards?” or “where do you buy your beans?” or anything.

But there were some operators, and it was south of Long Beach—a little bitty town there—and you had to be politically okay in this little town; I didn’t even know it was there. And he figured it out and got one or two Bingo parlors there. And he could run bigger pots or something than they could in Long Beach. So he was doin’ pretty good. And I got acquainted with him a little bit and admired him as a good operator. And later, they got closed.

In the meantime, we’re up here; we’re goin’ pretty good, and then we’re—got the Heart Tango. And there was Reno Club and the Fortune Club. Well, he opened a Bingo parlor on the corner over there across—that’s where Don’s Drug is. He put a Bingo parlor in there, which is the wrong side of the street and all. He was a pretty good operator. And he opened up. Then we competed a little, but he only ran a month or somethin’. And he could see it was no good, so he said, “To hell with it,” and I think he went back to southern California. I haven’t seen him in years. He had some money, so—.

But there it sat, and there’s nothing more dangerous than a fully equipped Bingo parlor sitting vacant with a sign in the window, “For sale or rent,” because someone comes along and rents it and opens up. So it sat there, and we didn’t have the money to handle it; and then I didn’t feel either if I had it, that maybe—I mean knowing what I know now, when they closed, I’d’ve immediately gone to the Reno Club and the Fortune Club and say, “Hey, let’s buy that place and make a drugstore out of it.” Or if they didn’t want to go, then I’d’ve done it myself. I’d’ve been money ahead; but, you know, you didn’t think that way then or didn’t know that much.

Anyway, we did nothing; and it sat there. I think there was another operator down in there and tried it and zero. It was still there, and then a fella came along—I don’t know his name—he was Russian—and we called him the mad Russian, ‘cause we didn’t like him.

And there was a Mrs. Carey, and she was a lovely little old lady. She’s like on the TV, if you wanted to put somebody’s grandmother—sweet, old grandmother—that’s what she looked like—you know—kinda chubby and round cheeks. She was a wealthy woman that had come here, and I don’t know if she came here for a divorce or how she got here. And the mad Russian and I—well, Mr. Ring’d remember his name if it matters. He was a promoter, and he looked like a Russian. His clothes were—well, like a hustling Russian. He wore his hair very long, which wasn’t fashionable then. He had a kind of a flowing tie like an artist, and his hat with the brim tipped up on one side and down on the other—that kind of a guy. And he kissed hands and clicked heels and things like that.

And Mrs. Carey—he’d promoted her, and she thought he was just the neatest thing ever. She was really stuck on him; and he was forty or something, and she was sixty or something,

and just a dumpy little old lady. But boy, she was stuck on him! And whatever he wanted, he got. And I think we got acquainted—they came around and played Bingo and—. And of course, you size up your customers, and they were very good customers. But we also caught on she had the money, and so we were super nice to them, of course.

Then he promoted her into this empty Bingo parlor over there; and fine, if he wanted it, he got it. And they opened it up, and he was the manager. It was her money, of course. So he just did absolutely crazy things—like the pots were, two for a dime, six dollars. So he went to maybe two for a dime, eight dollars or ten dollars or twelve dollars—he didn't care.

And so they ran. So it was instant turmoil in the Bingo business. And he was hurting everyone—of course, the place was full; but they still—we'd checked 'em very closely—and still with their full house and their big pots, well, they just weren't makin' it. And then they were gettin' robbed, too, 'cause he didn't know anything about the business, and the dealers can steal if you don't know how to watch 'em. So we found out enough that she had unlimited—I think we checked with the bank, which was kinda hard to do, but, you know, "What is Mrs. Carey's account?" And I think we found she had a couple of hundred thousand dollars in the bank or something—just huge amount, you know, for those times.

And then we got into her other—. Either her father or her husband or her ex-husband (he probably died) had invented— well, had invented—but was either the founder or the principal owner or the owner of the Molybdenum Company of America. And that's a very rare metal; it's only found certain places. And it's extremely valuable, and when you mix it with iron, you know, you get molybdenum steel, and that's the strongest. That's why the Ford Model T and the Wills

St. Claire cars and all were such quality cars because they had molybdenum steel in them, and it was very expensive. Anyway, it was a zillion-dollar company, and she owned a big chunk of that. So we thought well, she can go forever.

So while they were running—and it was a very, very difficult Bingo war—toughest one we ever had. Everybody got into it, and it was really touch-and-go then—it was just day-today. And with our little two-for-a-nickel, six-for-a-dime, we were hurtin' real bad. And of course, the two-for-a-dimers, they stayed with their schedules or tried to compete with him. We competed only on a half scale, which was fine. And course, we had the places full—all the places in town were full, and cards like that [spreads arms] because of these huge pots. And there were four Bingo parlors in Reno full every day, but everybody was losin' money—the pots got so big. So it was just a question of who lasted.

Well, we found out that Mrs. Carey wasn't gonna go broke, and then we were hopin' that they would split up or somethin'. And she just thought he was neat. And we thought, "Well, how can she stand him when he's losin' all this money for her?" and just didn't bother her a bit—. He'd say, "I'm needin' some more money," and she'd go write a check—no problem. So it was really scary.

So the three of us—it was Joe Zemansky and Freddie Aoyama (worked for the Reno Club) and me—and we worked together. And finally it got so desperate that we met daily—"What are we gonna do next?"—and we all did the same thing. And we went to the [city] council—"Can't we get," you know, "get it stopped?"

And they said, "No, we believe in—you know—once we get into that, then we'll have to tell 'em how to run their Craps and all," which was a pretty good point.

But we were tryin' everything and talkin' to everybody we knew and workin' and workin' and workin'. And I remember Freddie Aoyama, who's still here—and we're friends; I see him once in awhile. He sells tires or sells somethin' automotive, and I'll see him in the garage once a year. And we say, "How do you do? How do you do? How are ya?" His wife—and he had a real neat wife.

But Freddie was a little arrogant, and kinda cocky; and they had a lot of money, the Japs. And all they needed, they just could call Japan or L.A. and get more money.

And Joe Zemansky was kind of on a shoestring—I didn't know that. He had a big fancy place, but he didn't have too much money. And we all started comin' out—who had what and everything.

So anyway, we re workin', we're workin' every angle we could. So finally we thought, "We can't beat 'em with money, we can't this and that," so then we got somebody to get to the Russian. And we didn't bribe him; he was interested in something like a dance school or something that she didn't like for some reason. We got all this out, you know, which you can do—snoopin' and everything. But there was something he wanted to get into she didn't want him to get into, and so we found that out. And so we talked to him that he could—if we could get this thing kind of straightened out, we wouldn't be against maybe helpin' him get some money to go into this other thing. And of course, he was fed up with her, you know. He didn't like her at all, and she's hangin' on him every minute, you know—just kind of a hard way to make your money. So he was susceptible and listened.

So anyway, we made a deal, finally, that if he could talk Mrs. Carey into lowering the pots—that's all we asked to get back to close to where we used to be—then he could have

this job or this somethin' somewhere. And it was down the road, but it was—"Okay."

So anyway, then we agreed that we were gonna run these kind of pots. "Okay, how we gonna do it? How are we gonna keep—I know, we'll draw up an agreement"—that was it. So— who was the lawyer that was over there that was a wonderful man? Upstairs in those days? Kearney?

Bill Kearney. He was Joe Zemansky's lawyer—yeah—and we all respected him, and so he became the lawyer for the three of us. And we would meet, and any problem, we'd go see Bill Kearney—da da da da da. And it was right across the street, too.

So anyway, we were in Bill Kearney's office. And the Russian and me and Freddie Aoyama and Joe Zemansky—"Oh, we have an agreement, Mr. Kearney. We want to—" da da da da da.

Okay, fine," And he's drawin' it up, and he's got his pencil and paper out, and he's getting notes for it. "Okay," so on, so on, so on, so.

And we're all broke then—I mean Joe and I are broke. And Freddie still had plenty of money. And the Russian and Mrs. Carey, they had plenty of money—we were sittin' there, we re makin' this agreement, and Joe and I are kinda—and Joe and I would talk, too, behind Freddie's back, you know. We would have a meeting, and then Joe and I would meet later. This Freddie was a little treacherous. (So I understand how Pearl Harbor happened, but that's me, that's me.)

But okay, we're agreeing on this, and so Mr. Kearney— well, quite properly, he said, "Well, what's the consideration of this agreement?"

And so I said, "Well, what do you mean? What do you mean?"

He said, "Well, it should be something. What if someone violates it? Where are we? And so shouldn't there be somethin'?"

“Oh yeah.”

So the Russian, who's got plenty of money—and he was a little cocky—pretty cocky still—he said, “Well, I think we should each put up two thousand dollars in cash, and you can hold it, Mr. Kearney, and the first one that violates it loses his two thousand dollars, and we'll lay out the schedule,” da da da.

And so I'm goin', “Ooh, brother.”

So Joe and I are lookin' kind of funny, and we look at Freddie, and Freddie said, “That's fine with us. We'll put up our two thousand dollars!” [Laughing]

So Joe said, “What?” He said, “I don't have that in my pocket.” Joe was a real quick thinker, you know. “Sorry, I don't have that in my pocket, but I'll um—let's meet at two o'clock this afternoon (which he was—this was the morning). He was just stalling for time, which was good.

So “Okay, everybody. We'll come back at two o'clock.” And so we left, Joe and Freddie and I left. So, when we got rid of Freddie, Joe and I got together. We're walkin' up the street, and I says, “Joe,” I said, “I don't have two thousand dollars.”

And he said, “Neither do I!” [Laughs]

And I says, “Well, what do we do, what do we do?” I said, “We got it made and—” you know. And two thousand is like two hundred thousand.

And he says, “Let's go see Eddie Questa.”

And so—this is still in the morning—so we went up, and that's the first time I'd met—I'd seen Eddie around town—first time I'd met him. And he was down on the corner in the bank there; so we went in, and Joe introduced me. And of course Eddie was—had the big mortgage on the Fortune Club, so he was really watchin' the thing all the way. And so we're here—well, we've got to send Joe in.

Eddie was delighted to know there's an agreement 'cause he'd been supplyin' money

over there, and bankers don't like to keep puttin' money out. So “Oh, that's great.”

And Joe says, “Yeah, but here's the catch.” He said, “We gotta put up two thousand dollars.” And he said, “I don't have it,” and he said, “Bill here, I don't think has it either. He asked me. And Joe Zemansky was a double-crosser but was really nice there. He said, “Now Bill, here,” you know—”needs a little help, too, Eddie.”

So Eddie thought about it quite properly, and he thought, “Da da da da da da da.” And he said, “Well,” he said, “I may have to talk to somebody on this. But it's eleven-forty-five—why don't you fellows come back after lunch around one o'clock, one-thirty.”

“Okay.”

So we left and na na na na na. And then we came back. So Eddie said, “It's okay for you, Joe—it's all right. But,” he said, “Bill,” he said, “I've heard a lot about you—it's all good—but,” he said, “I don't have anything on you.” He said, “You got a little account here, but nothin'—you know—nothing financial.” But he said, “You're from L.A.—you banked down there, didn't you?”

And I said, “Yeah.”

He said, “Did you make any loans?”

And I said, “Well, not really—a little bit.”

And he said, “Well, do you have someone I can call?” He said, “I really have to get somethin' besides—.” He said, “As far as I'm concerned, you're okay.” But he said, “To keep me—me, Eddie Questa—clean, I have to really get somethin' else.”

And so there was a friend of ours in L.A.—what's his name?—it's an important name, too—Phil Simon. He was a Jewish fella who had married a Gentile lady, which was kinda big news in those days. And his wife's name was Bayonne, I remember—pretty first name. And she was a very close friend of my mother's. So through that, we met Phil Simon;

and of course, he was the only Jew in anybody we knew—the only Jewish person. And of course, we were a little suspicious. And there are Jews and Jews; of course, there's Irish and Irish—there's all kinds—but there are many Jews that are kinda chiselers. But Phil was just so far the other way. I think because he was Jewish, he might have gone—but he was just And to this day I can say Phil was just the nicest man I ever met. And then he was a super banker. He had a little bitty bank, and he ran it up to three banks, and finally he died of a heart attack. And he just didn't miss a bet; he was right on top of everything and would do anything he could to help ya and just a super guy.

So I gave Eddie, Phil's number. And so Eddie called Phil. And boy, he couldn't've called a better person 'cause when I came back, you know, from my one-thirty or one-forty-five, I was kinda like that [frightened face]. And he says, "Who is this guy Simon you gave me?"

I said, "Well, he's so-and-so."

And he said, "Well, boy, either you're all right or he sure thinks you are," he said. "He couldn't've said enough good things about you. So," he said, "You can have the two thousand," which was just unbelievable—'cause I had no security. So he gave me a note, which I still have; after I paid it off, I framed it. And I used to keep it in my office. I guess I ought to put it back. Well, it's a beauty—it's a note for two thousand dollars [drawing a note], and it's a regular bank note—you know—two thousand da da da. And then in the corner—or this corner, or somethin'—in pencil, is "Okay, E.Q." Then I used to show—see this used to be Eddie's office here where we are. [First National Bank building]. He was a super guy with me.

Anyway, we put up the two thousand dollars and went back to the schedule, and

then, of course, the other place, being in a bum location, they only ran a week or so and folded up. I don't think we ever had to do anything on the other. I think that maybe she was through, and maybe he'd stolen some money when the thing was goin' on; but he disappeared, and that was the end of it. But it was sure scary there for awhile.

Oh, I'll tell you a funny one about Freddie. Freddie Aoyama did have some good points. So when we were workin' on this, well, he and I got very friendly. We weren't too friendly before 'cause we were competitors, or he looked down on us—our little two-for-a-nickel place. But then he could see—although he was a little haughty, but he wasn't a hundred percent—he was pretty good most of the time—he could see we were really, you know, tryin' like heck to straighten things out, and we had a lot of good ideas. So the further we got into this thing, the more friendlier he got because we were all workin' hard.

So while it was goin' on (I know this is later), uh—see, this was '38. Let me jump up to '42, and then I'll go back. But this is on Freddie.

So when Pearl Harbor in—what was that? That was '41.

December seventh, and this is—yeah, it was '41, '71, '76—yeah, it was thirty-five years last year, yeah. But after Pearl Harbor, it was a Japanese place, so they had to close. They ran maybe a week or two, and it was no local thing; it was just I think the owners and all and maybe somethin'. But anyway, they just closed up because they were Japanese owners, and about half their help was Japanese. So they closed up. Freddie wasn't interned or anything; he was still around. And the reason they closed was the United States was at war with Japan. And although Freddie was an American citizen—he was born in Berkeley, I think—he was just my age—but he was

out of business. So with a holdover from the Bingo war, I knew him real good, and so I immediately went to work to get that place. And I had a running start over everybody else because I'd known Freddie from the Bingo war real good.

"It's all right, Freddie. Come on!" So I'd take him out to dinner—he and his wife—which he liked very much. He liked to associate with white people socially. He thought that was neat. And he had a wonderful wife. I still see her once in a while. She's one of the nicest Japanese ladies I ever saw—real classy. So we'd go here and there, and one night, I'll never forget, one time we were—I took 'em always the newest places, and they never had been anywhere in town. They just—he would go to work and go home; and they would eat at home, you know. And they had a little family and just—. So it was a big thing to go to nightclubs.

So I remember we went out to Lawton's, which—you know, it's had four hundred names. I don't know who owned it then, but it was a pretty good nightclub at the time. And we went out there for dinner. So we were sittin' at the—and they had some games—and so Freddie and I were sittin' at the bar. And I don't think I had a date; it was just Freddie and I and his wife. And she'd gone to the ladies' room, so it was just Freddie and I. And it wasn't very crowded. And there was some drunk there; I don't know if he was at the bar, at the "21" table, or somethin'. He came over; he looked at Freddie (he looked at him like that [mean expression]), and he didn't grab him, but he might've almost got his coat, you know. He says, "Hey, you! Who are you—Chinaman or a Jap?"

And Freddie, who was very arrogant (and I thought, "Oh my God, we're gonna have a real 'hey, Rube' here, and I'm gonna be in the middle of it." I couldn't fight my

way out of a paper bag—you know how your mind goes) —and Freddie just like that said, "Chinaman."

And the fellow said, "Oh, okay, buddy!" and away he went.

So then I—"Freddie," I said—and he was always so arrogant, you know— [with put-on deep voice] "I'm a bla bla bla bla..." And I said, "This guy asked you this way, and you said, 'Chinaman.'" I said, "Why did you do that?"

He said, "Do you think I'm crazy?" [Laughs] And my respect for him grew greatly right then. I thought, "Well, there's a guy that uses his head."

But then 'cause they're closed, we worked on it. And we made a deal with him. We couldn't buy the place, but we leased it 'cause they were sure—and they were right—that when things cooled down or the war got over, maybe even before, they can get back in. So I got a lease on it, and I think it was a year-to-year thing. But it was quite satisfactory, because we got in there, and we kept our Heart Tango. So then the Heart Tango remained two-for-a-nickel; and the Reno Club, which I think we left the name Reno Club— called it Harrah's Reno Club—and made it two-for-a-dime. They'd always had a few shills—the Japs. And we got rid of the shills—same old story—and did real good. That became the best Bingo parlor in Reno.

Might ask you just a little bit going back into this early period of the thirties. This was just at the end of the time when Graham and McKay and Wingfield had their hold. When you first came here, John Cooper was the mayor; and Lou Gammell was the chief of police. You had said, when we were talking about doing the interview, that the police had treated you so nice, and the local politicians had been so pleasant. The councilman for this area was Rags Justi.

He worked at the Bank Club. Yeah, sure.

Well, I'm glad you brought that up because Bill McKnight, who was everybody's lawyer, as I explained—and I got the casino, and I got the lease on the one on Center. I wasn't too sure about the license. I think Bob Douglass took me over and got the license—that was it.

And then when I got the Heart Tango, I was a little nervous there again. I just—it wasn't—didn't seem—you know—you should have your license in your hand. And I already had a license, as it was a new place. And I remember I think Bill McKnight took me over. And the chief of police had to okay it, which was perfunctory; they okayed everything. But that's when I met Lou Gammell. And he was very nice.

We used to hang around the Bank Club, right from the start, because it was the place in Reno. The Palace Club was pretty good, but the Bank Club was a little better—I mean it was a prettier place and everything. But we went both places—we'd go to the Palace; we'd go to the Bank—and I'm talkin' about our guys; we hung out together. And we'd get all—close our place, we'd close at one o'clock. Of course, they're still open. And we would go to the Bank Club or the Palace, usually, and have a drink and mark a Keno ticket.

And I was very interested in them, but I didn't have ideas of getting into gambling right away, but I thought maybe some day. So I just loved to watch how they did things, you know.

And the Bank Club was on the square, which was—most places weren't. The Palace Club was, too, but I think those are the only two places in town that I can say were really on the square.

I thought that was a very interesting distinction. Did you not consider Bingos as gambling at that time?

No, it was gambling, yeah. I just—"gambling place"—I used that instead of "casino" or "gambling house"—that's kinda awkward.

There was Graham and McKay and Jack Sullivan. And Jack was the manager, and he was just the manager. And he was really interested in Faro Bank for some reason. So he used to—well, he would hang out over there—sit by the Faro Bank. But he was the manager and then almost a figurehead 'cause it was Graham and McKay—they were—. And McKay wasn't around too much, but Bill Graham was around a lot.

Then when they had to go away to prison—that was for, you know, six or eight years; it was a pretty good stretch—then Sullivan became the boss, and they left him in full charge. And he was really the boss. You can get Jack Sullivan's okay, why—. And he was the fixer, you know; he was the one that—. But the Bank Club was on the square, and all the other places were cheaters—a lot of little places; it was their way of doin' business. The Bank Club, although they were on the square, they didn't mind the other people cheating because they would get some money by cheating, o' course, and they'd wind up at the Bank Club, so the Bank Club would eventually get it all. So they were for the little places.

And I remember one time my first dollar slot machine that we had when we got the Blackout Bar, which was later—I'll tell you about that later—but was a dollar machine in there. It was the first dollar machine I'd ever owned, and it was war time—they quit makin' them—so they were very hard to get, and they were very expensive. I mean like a slot machine was sixty dollars or something, and this dollar machine, I think it cost six or seven hundred. And it was fun having a dollar machine, plus it made a little money.

But I was so proud of it. Anyway, I went home or something—I didn't always stay till the bar closed—and then, why, we were robbed. We lost some liquor, and we lost our dollar slot machine, which was a tremendous tragedy in that the liquor was replaceable, although it was very hard to get; but the dollar slot machine was irreplaceable. And it was an inside job. You could know that because they got it just at the right time, and they had to have a car at the back door out in the alley and everything. I told the police everything I knew, I called a cop right away, which you weren't supposed to do. But I did—that's the way I was brought up.

So they caught the fellas. It was a bartender of ours in connection with a crossroader from across the street at a— can't remember the bartender's name, but the crossroader was Frank Sheely. He was a real rough guy. He was one of those cheaters that'll do anything, you know, and I think including murder maybe, although I couldn't prove it, but—. And he was a perfect crossroader 'cause he was kinda husky looking— he wasn't fat—he was well built in pretty good shape, rugged features, and he dressed very well, and he just looked like a retired cowboy that had made it a little bit. And he had a little drawl, and he was as smooth a talker as there was. And he was a real super cheater. Anyway, he's the one that got our slot machine, which we found out. So they wanted me to—he came to see me or somebody came and, "Please call it off. Frank made a mistake. You got your machine back, and he'll give you some money—just forget it."

I said, "No way." I said, "He stole my machine." And he was a kind of a friend of mine—he was a customer, so I was real nice to the guy. And I said, "Well, I thought he was a friend of mine—he turned around and stole my slot machine." I said, "No way—I'm gonna press the charges as far as I can go.

Then they're tellin' me, "Well, gee, Bill. Let's—why don't you let it go."

I said, "No way." I said, "I'm mad! I'm gonna get him."

So then Jack Sullivan called me up. And Jack Sullivan never called anybody up.

And I answered the phone in the Bingo parlor. And it was either before we opened or after we closed. [Deep voice] "Hello. Bill Harrah?"

"Yeah."

"This is Jack Sullivan."

"Oooh. Yes, Mr. Sullivan."

He said, "Could I see ya for a minute?"

And I said, "Oh, yes, sir. I'll come right over."

And he said, "No, that won't be necessary."

He said, "I'll come and see you." And he said, "You're over there," da da da. He described where it was.

And I said, "Yah, yah. Right across from so-and-so," da da da. I told somebody—I said, "Jack Sullivan is comin' over to see me. Wow!"

So he came over—I remember he had a cane. And we had some steps, and he had a little—he was kinda heavy. But I was really impressed. It would be like President Carter or somebody comin' to see you. It was—you know—"Jack Sullivan comin' to see me! Wow!"

So he came in; I took him in the office and sat down. I said, "Oh, yes, Mr. Sullivan, what?"

And he laughed—he turned on all of his personality. He didn't have too much, but he turned on all he had. He's grinnin' and laughin', you know. He said, "Well, Bill," he said, "you're doin' pretty good here. We wondered how you were gonna do when you opened, but you're doin' fine. We're glad to have you here. You're a good guy. You get around. I know you come over to our place, and you're not the biggest gambler we have, but you spend a dollar or two, and we like

you very much. You're a good citizen...." On and on and on, and that's just fine. "We like to have young guys like you, and that's good. Oh—" blah blah blah.

Finally he said, "Now about this Sheely thing." (This is about a week before the trial.) He said, "Now Frank is a—" he said, "he's an impulsive guy, you know." He said, "Frank's really a pretty good guy. But," he said, "once in a while he'll get kinda drunk, and he'll do the damndest things. And," he said, "I just want to hit him in the nose when he does that. But Frank's really a good guy." And he said, "He got your slot machine—there's no question about that— but he didn't really—. It was just kind of a prank like some kids play, and, you know." And he said, "Really why don't we just forget this, Bill." He said, "It was really—."

And I really stood up to him—I was amazed at myself. said, "That is—I respect you very much, Mr. Sullivan; that is not true!" I said, "Sheely wasn't drunk, and he wasn't— big thing." I said, "He's the biggest crook in town, and you know it. And this slot machine was just another caper that he's pulled." I said, "No way!" I said, "He deliberately, soberly stole my slot machine and a lot of booze. And," I said, "I'm gonna get him!" I said, "I would really love to do anything I could for you. Ask me anything else to do, and I'll do it. But," I said, "I'm not gonna—."

And I guess I was so impressive that he said, "Well, okay, Bill." He said, "I respect your thinkin'. But," he said, "I think, if you want to get along in Reno," he said, "I think you're makin' a mistake." He said, "Here we scratch each other's back," and da da da da da, you know. That was it.

And Frank did—they had a trial, and I testified against him, and he went to prison. And I guess some people thought he might get even with me, and I should have worried about it maybe, but I never did. But he was

kind of a blowhard. And then later, he got killed in Vegas in a bar room brawl. And just a few years later people said, "Oh, I wonder how come he got killed."

And I said, "Well, he probably stole somethin' [laughs] from somebody."

That really took a lot of courage to stand up to that crowd.

Well, it was just absolutely the right thing—and I said, "Oh brother." It was the question, "Are you gonna be a good guy or a bad guy?" It was—you know—really the principles were involved—not that I've—but I was brought up a certain way, and just—to rue it was just no question what you did. You know, somebody stole somethin', you yelled copper and you put 'em in jail. And you put 'em in as hard as you could. That was it.

The stealing of the dollar slot machine was the only time anything like that happened. That was the only one. Prior to that, I'd been just kind of a nothin' as far as the crossroaders were concerned. But then after that episode, why I was anti-crossroader, which was supposed to intimidate me. But most of those fellas are a lot of talk and not much action. But there are some real tough ones—or there were some real tough ones, but I just went about my business. And I didn't have any security or anything; it wasn't even thought of in those days. And I just went where I wanted to go and didn't worry about it, and nobody ever bothered me. But there were stories. And Cliff Judd—the Galloper—I don't know if anyone heard of him. He was one of the top crossroaders all over the West. And he got involved in several things, and I was on the other side. And the Galloper was gonna do this and that, but he never did. In fact, he showed up in Stanley a couple of times; and he wasn't necessarily after me. But some

fellas up there—that were also crossroaders [chuckling]— had a place there, and he was a friend of one of the sons. They were really terrible—those guys.

But I'll stay on Reno, I guess.

How about some of the other people who were important around here.

Well, when we go into Graham and McKay, then I'll go into Justi. Justi was I think the bar manager at the (oh, I'll go into him first) at the Bank Club, but he was really their city councilman. And Justi was very independent or pretended to be, and he would usually go along with what the Bank Club crowd wanted, but not a hundred percent. He maintained a little—. And I thought sometimes he just voted a different way just to show that he was independent. But I also think it would be safe to say that when he went against the Bank Club, it was on a minor thing. I don't think he ever went against 'em on anything major. But he was a good councilman. He was all right.

Bill Graham was a real gregarious fella, and he and I got along real good—always. And he was a good sport, you know—well, he really spent too much money. If you remember, if you knew him, you know, he'd go around and buy drinks everywhere, which of course, I did that, but not on the scale he did. But also he'd give money to everybody, which I never— I thought a long time ago that was kinda dumb. But he would come out of the Bank Club or somethin'; and all these bums, you know—"Gimme a five, Bill." "Gimme ten" or "Loan me." And he'd just hand it out, just forever.

And then McKay was the quiet one—Jim. They were both crooks, but they weren't crooks in their casino. And McKay— I liked him very much. I got to know him, and he had a wife that he married—a young gal. It didn't last very long, Cora Sue or something.

But I remember when he was goin' with her—and I was goin' along for some reason. And we would double-date a lot, and I don't know—maybe my girlfriend—her friends or something; but I went out a lot with Jim McKay.

Jack Sullivan I just saw around the bars. He would buy everybody a drink all the time. He never drank very much, but he would be in other bars like the old—what was Johnny Petrinovich's—oh, the Grand—Grand bar. Bill Graham was in there just all day long. And the Bank Club would have a problem; they'd come out of the Bank Club and go over to the Grand bar and ask Bill about it.

But Bill finally ran out of money, I remember. I remember he wanted to see me one time, and it was, "Why does he want to see me for?" And he was really spendin' money in our place, just—. He was gamblin' a little bit and runnin' up bars, you know, thousands of dollars a day. This went on for months. We thought, "How can he do it?" And then it went into years, you know. And then he'd get behind—he had some money comin'. See, they'd sold out to some other—but he had money comin'. Then he'd go to our management and say well, his money'd be in at so-and-so. Then he came to me one time. And it was financial. I know we handled it all right, but it just surprised me that Bill Graham of all people would need to even talk money. But he was havin' problems.

Then McKay, he handled his money good, 'cept he married that real young girl, which I shouldn't talk about that. I think they had a baby or adopted one or something. Her name was Carol Lou or something [Cora Sue Collins].

But he was always real classy. He'd keep comin' to bar, and he would—like he'd be with her, and they'd be coming in for dinner—they didn't hang around the bars. And instead of

"Hey, have a drink!"—he would, you know, "Hello, Mr. Harrah." And he'd go sit at his table or something; then someone would say—lean over the bar and [softly], "Mr. McKay would like you to have a drink"—you know—real smooth. He was okay. I really liked 'em both.

But Justi, I didn't know him—I knew him well enough, you know; but I never got very close to him. I described him pretty good, I think. He was the leading councilman. I knew all the mayors just—not friendly—just "Hello, Mr. Mayor" sort of thing.

And the old Golden Hotel—George Wingfield—I didn't know him except to say hello to. But I'm very familiar with the Golden; I stayed there—the first place I stayed in Reno. And then a couple of times when I was kicked out of the house, or maybe I was moved out of a place and hadn't got my new apartment yet. I would—so I stayed at the Golden many times. I stayed at the Riverside a lot, too. In fact, I lived at the Riverside for—oh, when? That's movin' up a little. Yeah, that's the next—that's the forties. We're still in the thirties.

And there was the Town House. Do you remember the Town House? [George] Frenchy Perry and Jack Blackman were the owners. Jack's the one that shot the guy in the Bank Club later. Fact, he's still down in Texas—I hear from him—no, he died. He died recently. But Mary Blackman—she was a cigarette girl there. And she and Jack—I don't know if they were married then, but they got married—and they were still together. And they kinda kept in touch with me. Whenever they'd come to town, they'd call me up. I didn't want to get too close to them because he was—I never liked Jack too much. He was a cheater from way back. Plus he had got in this fight, and I think he was half right, but he did kill the guy. And I liked Frenchy 'cept he's such a dirty talker, but he was a real funny guy.

And I used to hang around there quite a bit at night 'cause they had orchestra. I remember they had what's his name?—who later became the Sparks councilman or mayor? lie was in the legislature or railroad—Chet Christensen.

He used to sing "Mother Machree" over there, I remember. I would—yeah, he would sing it at my request, and I'd always tip him. It was the only place in town that had any music, and it was pretty good—not that I was a dancer, but I loved to listen.

But I'll never forget—I was there one time, and this Johnny O'Hara—. First time I came it was Johnny and Kay O'Hara—only they weren't married yet—and I was with my first wife. But they came back later after I was established, and they came up one time—or a lot—we were close friends. And so Kay and Johnny come in, and Johnny's like I said—fell into these games. So "Where'll we go and what do we do?" and this and that, and they wanted a nice dinner. And I said, "Okay. The best steak in town is the Town House." And I said, "The owners are friends of mine, or kinda." I said, "I get along fine. But," I said, "the gambling is crooked as hell." So I said, "Just don't play. Buy a lot of drinks, and I'll introduce you to everybody, and dance if you want, and we'll have the best steak you ever had. Enjoy!"—you know.

Okay. We went over. So we had a few drinks before. So we got in there, and we're at the bar, and everybody's real nice and buyin' drinks. And so Johnny turned around, and he saw the Crap table. So he got his money out, and he started over to the Crap table. He got over there before Kay saw him. And she was kind of a wonderful gal, but she'd get a few drinks and she'd get a little loud—not, you know—but you could hear her. So she turned, and she said, "Johnny! Get away from that Crap table! Don't you remember Bill told us not to play in here!"

[Laughs] So every head in the Town House looked at me!

And I remember Frenchy looked at me, and I said [head down, waves], “Hi, Frenchy.” [Laughs]

So then it really worried me a little. Frenchy could kinda take a joke, but, he took his business seriously. So then the first chance, we went in to have dinner out, and I got ahold of Frenchy, you know, and I said, “I couldn’t be sorrier.” I said, “I did tell him. Naturally he’s a friend of mine; he’s goin’ to school.” I said, “I don’t mind bring-in a guy that’s got some money—you know—let you make a couple of bucks. But,” I said, “Johnny’s like this [up to nose]. He’s goin’ to medical school. And then,” I said, “I’m gonna have to pay for half of his trip. I couldn’t.” And I said, “The dumbbell—I just said it. And I didn’t say it was crooked. I just said maybe he might have better luck somewhere else. But,” I said, “I’m awful sorry, Frenchy.” Boy!

But Kay, until she died, I used to throw that at her. I said, “Boy, you almost got me killed one night!” [Laughing]

That was a fun place, that little Town House. I liked that very much. And old Chet Christensen—we still talk about it whenever I see him. And he’ll mention this today—”Remember ‘Mother Machree?’” He had a beautiful voice.

I wasn’t too close to any of the city officials. It was just in the way of—when it was necessary. If I had business with the sheriff, I went to see the sheriff. If it was the mayor, why—but I didn’t socialize with ’em or anything. But I remember most of ’em. And like Ray Root was the sheriff for years. And I just knew him to say hello, but as I remember, he was an excellent sheriff. And then when he retired, I think Bud Young came along and was sheriff for years, which—I’ll talk about Bud later.

MEMORY SKETCHES OF SOME EARLY-DAY EMPLOYEES

Yeah, Fred Brady was a Bingo man, and I met him in Venice. He was working down there when we first opened. He was working for the Japs, as we called ’em. Frank Furuta owned most of the Bingo or Tango—Japanese Tango parlors down there. Fred worked there and was very good.

He opened a place near us of his own, a two-for-a-nickel Bingo, which maybe’s where I got the idea for a two-for-a-nickel Bingo. And he worked, he was a good competitor. He worked real hard and made a success out of it. But then it, like all the Bingos down there, it went out when everything else went out. But at that time I got acquainted with him.

Later he was in Reno; I didn’t bring him to Reno. I forget where he worked here, but then he started working for us. And he was a super Bingo man, as good as any ever. But he had a drinking problem, which some people can do. He got along for years with his drinking problem and still did a super job. But then occasionally, there’d be trouble of some kind. So we worked with him; we never fired him. Then he went on the wagon, finally.

We’d opened in Vancouver, Washington; Bingos were legalized there for a short time. And I’d sent up a manager that worked for me in Venice and had worked here, who had had problems; and I was just a young guy then and was learning [chuckles] about life, I guess. I was gonna reform this fella, and he was on drugs, I think, plus liquor. I liked his wife very much, and I liked him. I sent him to Vancouver, Washington to run the place. I had two partners up there, and I wanted to do a good job. I wanted to do a good job just because I liked to do a good job, but also because of my partners, I wanted to do an extra good job. And he didn’t do it, which

is—no use going into; he just failed. And after repeated tries and repeated trips up there, then I sent Fred up, and Fred did very well. Maybe six months, we ran with Fred in charge; we did very well. And maybe once or twice were a couple of problems, but not worth talkin' about.

Then after that, Fred came back to Reno and worked with us some time, then he went to Lake Tahoe and ran the Bingo up there till he retired about, oh, five years ago. He's still around; and I see him occasionally.

I have a funny one to tell on Fred. He was, as I said, quite a boozier. And he was a Catholic—supposed to be a good one, but he really wasn't. And he had a brother that was a priest, and his brother came to visit him. Fred was the type of fella who always lived in a hotel. So he lived in one of the hotels around here, and his brother came.

So it was Sunday morning, and the brother wanted to go to church, of course. He assumed Fred was going, and Fred caught on right away, but he didn't know where the Catholic church was! So [laughing]—so he grabbed—he always rode in cabs—so he grabbed a cab, and he and his brother got in. Cab driver said, "Where?"

And Fred said, "The Catholic church."

And the cab driver said, "Which one?"

And Fred was a quick thinker, and he said, "The big one!" [Laughs] So he was saved—according to his story—although I met his brother, and he wasn't any dummy. I think he caught on.

And Bob Ring—. Should've started with him because he came along in Venice. The funny thing about Bob, we opened the Circle Game and got straightened out; and all my school chums didn't work out, and I started hiring some Venice kids. And there was a Charlie Capp worked there, who was quite good; and of all the people we tried, he was

the best. So Charlie was kind of a Number Two man besides me. And I think Charlie and I ran it just about, for a few days there or a few weeks or even months, with a little occasional help. Then things picked up, and so I asked Charlie if he knew anyone else that could work that was good. And he said, yes, he knew a fella in Santa Monica, Bob Ring, that he knew very well was a good, honest kid, da-da-da.

So I said, "Bring him around." So he brought Bob around. And "Hello."

"Hello." And so in those days it was no big thing; you just went to work. So we put Bob to work, and he worked a couple of days and worked real hard, very quiet.

And so Charlie asked me after about the second day—he said, "What do you think of Bob Ring?"

And I said, "Well, he's okay. Except," I said, "he never says anything. He's a real quiet and—nothin'."

And Charlie said, "Well, he's not that way at all. He's really very outgoing," or whatever (that isn't how Charlie talked, but—). He said, "Give him a chance. He'll loosen up, and he'll be fine."

So I forget how we got the message to Bob—I think I talked to him, or Charlie talked to him. "You're doin' okay, but loosen up," which Bob did. He became himself, and—which he has a wonderful personality, and the little old ladies, which were playin' in those days just like they do today, just loved Bob Ring. He'd kid 'em and remembered everything about 'em and remembered their grandchildren's name and what kind of cigarettes they smoked, and he kidded 'em, which surprised me—I learned a lot. I never got that far 'cause I don't have that kind of a personality. But he would say things to the little old ladies that were almost shocking sometimes— not dirty, but just—you know—

"And your hat's on crooked," or somethin', you know. But he said it in such a way that they just loved it, so—. Fact, you could almost tell—well, you can today in a Bingo parlor, which that was very similar to. It was like we had two stations; there were fifteen stools exactly, on each station. And Bob Ring would work one station, and say, Charlie Capp would work the other, and I was runnin' the game. And if the place wasn't full, Bob Ring would have fourteen players, and maybe Charlie'd have six or eight, cause they just loved Bob.

Then Bob was—his father died when he was very young. He lived with his mother and his brother Harry, an older brother. And so we went from one game in Venice to two games, to three games. And Bob came right along, and within a short time he was in part charge of all three games and worked very well. It was all new to him, but to me, too. It was just trial and error and common sense that made it go pretty good.

I'll never forget one time Bob's brother came to work—Harry. And Harry was older than Bob, but Bob was the boss; and Harry—I thought, "Gee, is that gonna work?" but it did; Harry was pretty good. But I'll never forget—and they both lived at home. The mother was a widow, and the money meant quite a bit. And I remember one time we had drinking problems with some of the fellas, not that they were drunks, but drinking when they were working. So we had a strict rule—if you drank on the job, you didn't get fired but you got bawled out and maybe laid off for a few days. So Bob Ring, the boss, caught his brother, Harry Ring, drinking on the job. So he bawled him out and laid him off for a week, I think, which was the right thing to do without any question. But then when Bob went home, and his mother—and Harry went home first (he'd been laid off), and then Bob went home to dinner or somethin'—and his

mother, I guess, lit into him as much as she ever did (she was really a nice lady) about layin' off his own brother, they needed the money and da da da. Bob did the right thing. So the games in Venice, I think I mentioned, were off and on, and off and on.

When we opened in Reno, it was really a branch—a small branch—of our operation in Venice. So Bob was the most valuable man I had, but I didn't want to spare him down there, so I sent another fellow up to run Reno. And he didn't work out too well, and I was here an awful lot. The fella wasn't stealing or anything, but he really wasn't paying as much attention to business as I liked. And when we got where it looked like it would be successful, and that things in Venice weren't too bad, then I asked Bob to move up here. That was a big move for him, born and raised in Santa Monica and his mother down there and all. And he thought about it, but not too long, and he came on up and [chuckles]—been here ever since.

He took over when he got here and did an admirable job right from Day One, as far as managing the place. Bob and I worked together, I'd say just about perfectly, all those years. And we worked, you know, almost as partners. We just conferred, and, "What do we do next, what do we do next?"

And another example I'll give on Bob, right straight down the line, we had another fellow we brought up from Venice named Bill Goupil, who worked for us quite awhile, and he's retired now. He left us and worked for Harvey's for a few years. He now lives in Carson. I see him occasionally. And we're good friends. Bill Goupil. He and Bob were very close; in fact, they were roommates. I think they had a room over the Palace Club. And Bill Goupil got to playin' around and drinkin', so Bob laid him off. And I remember it was kinda tough, then; I think

everybody got five dollars a day. And it was similar problem, only no mother involved. But Goupil owed half the rent, and Goupil liked to spend his money anyway; so Bob was stuck with all the rent, I remember. But it was the right thing to do, and he did it.

So then Bob met a girl here—Lucille—and they were married—still married, apparently very happily. And they had one son. Bob's been extremely loyal.

When we got bigger and bigger and got more—what's the word? When we got real big, it was—. Bob has been my right-hand man all along and did anything—I was president, and he was president. But it got really beyond him—his capabilities of the president's job, which he knew except that—, So then we had another president— [Maurice] Sheppard—who was a big turnaround, which I'll go into later—and then later Lloyd Dyer, and Bob Ring just couldn't—with his background and all—couldn't do what they did. And I couldn't either. We don't have their backgrounds or their capabilities. Bob has always been a super guy, wonderful personality, and extremely well liked by everybody, and still is. He's now—I'm chairman of the Board, and he's Vice chairman, and his duties are just about what he wants to do.

He started the golf tournaments for us years ago, I think twenty-some years ago. He was quite a golfer; he still plays, I think. And our golf tournaments became super tournaments—very popular. We still have them, not quite as big as we did. But Bob got into that, which worked out pretty good 'cause as he retired from other things, he got in the golfing bigger, plus other things. So he's as active as he wants to be, I believe. And he works just about every day, but he does what he wants to do, which is the way it ought to be.

There's another one I should mention—is Billy Jackson, as he was in the early days. He

worked in Venice. He was what—a chip game dealer or operator, which was Roulette games they played at the beach, which they had an electrical wheel on the wall, but it was just like Roulette and very popular when it could operate. And Bill either was a chip game in our building, and it was—a lessee had it—and that's where I first met Bill; he worked in there. And he has a wonderful personality. And he's crippled, but he doesn't let it bother him; he has kind of a cleft foot, but he moves fine.

So Billy, I knew him down there, and then the chip games closed. And either he came to work for us down there, or—I'm not sure—in the Bingo. Then when we opened on Center Street, Billy was the boss. (That's before we opened over here where I brought someone else.) So I think Billy had been working up here and was out of work or something. So he was the boss. And the place was a failure, which I went into that, didn't I?

But Billy was not the easiest person to work with. He had his ideas, which I think in that first case he was probably right 'cause I wanted to do it Venice way, and he—"No, no, you should do it Reno way." So we got along, but it just wasn't perfect.

So then we closed. So then when we reopened, Billy was still around, but I wasn't too anxious to get him. You know, I didn't hate him or anything, but he just—. So that's why I brought another man up by name Tom Gidney to run the place. And Tom didn't work out.

But then later—not too much later—Billy came back to work, and he worked okay. But Billy was a little strong, and you had to learn him, and he liked to kinda run it if you let him. But once you got the message to him that that was his job and to stay in his slot, he worked out fine. So he worked for us for years, and he—we had a retirement of sixty-five, but we intelligently allow exceptions in there. And

Billy at sixty-five, he was like most men of fifty. So he kept on working and I think till he was seventy-five or seventy-seven or something.

And then we started retiring—got a lot more serious. We had quite a few over sixty-five, and it was time to really start getting serious. And Billy was still doing a good job, but it just—politically, or whatever you want to say, to get rid of a lot of people—it was really time to get rid of Billy also, which he really didn't want to leave, but he was very graceful about it. I think I asked Bob Ring recently about Billy for some reason. And he said, "Oh yeah, he's working at the Onslow," [chuckles] "and doin' a fine job." He's a pit boss at the Onslow, and he's gotta be eighty years old. And I betcha, in case you'd want to walk by there and take a look at him, I bet he doesn't look over sixty. And, well, when I met him, his father looked just like him, except for the foot, just like him. And I think his father's probably still—and his grandfather and his great grandfather were alive. And the last I heard, I think his great grandfather died at a hundred or somethin', and his grand—just one of those families that go on and on and on; they all look alike. Oh, I guess that's enough of that.

One of the things that we didn't talk about in this early period was your use of the Wine House as kind of a bank.

[Chuckles] Well, we were next to the Wine House, and we discovered instantly where it was, and the food was so great. And the Frankoviches were so great; it was just a wonderful place—busy and friendly and everything. And they had a safe there with compartments in it, and you could rent them. And I don't remember (that was Bob Ring's department) whether we rented one or just left our bankroll with the bartender, which

wouldn't surprise me. But that was our office. See, we—our Bingo was no—wasn't even a building there. That was just a ceiling between two walls; we had a twenty-five-foot room on a twenty-five-foot lot, which was really fun. But the Wine House next door—and you wanted a sandwich, you wanted a beer, you wanted whatever—there it was. It was wonderful. Boy, we loved the Wine House—and right next door. That was really a landmark, wasn't it?

Did I mention earlier about the bar down here—the Alpine Club?—on Center Street. That was next to our first place. And I can't remember the man that ran it—a real nice fella. That was a bar and restaurant. And we hung around there 'cause it was next door, and I think we left our bankroll there. We were good customers. I think it was Eddie [Maier]—Bob Ring could tell you his name, I'm sure—owned it. I can just see him—big, kinda short, and kinda chubby, and a big grin on his face—wonderful food. But Eddie was the bar man.

You know, it was very tough at first. And who was it? No, Bob Ring wasn't over there; it was one of the other managers. We'd get down where our bankroll was down to nothin', and they would borrow from Eddie, a hundred or two hundred to keep goin' which—in fact, I didn't know at the time they borrowed it. Even when I found out about it, I was pleased, you know, 'cause I wouldn't've even thought about askin' him, but we were good customers. And lookin' at it from his point, we were the, you know—the placed close, and here comes the whole gang drinkin' and—so we were good customers. But a hundred, you know, was a lot of money. And of course, we always paid him back.

That's really a remarkable arrangement for financing in those early days, you know, to leave your bankroll with the bartender.

Yeah. Well, you trusted him, of course. I think that hotel's still there; I don't know if you can see it yet. Yeah, I can see it, but I can't see the name. My door's right above the place; we stayed there. And I think it's the same hotel and the same name today.

WARTIME INTERLUDE AND THE BLACKOUT BAR

See, business—after the Bingo war was over, then as we had the only two-for-a-nickel in town, why, we did very well. And then we didn't make millions, but we made money every month for several years there and got all caught up on our bills and debts and everything, and started looking around for expansion. And one that came along, first one, was the old Block N, I believe it was, which was next to the bank on Virginia. And then they moved up north, didn't they?

Yeah. And a couple of fellas—[Richard] “Tricky Dick” Kolbus and Joe—what was his last name? Oh, Joe Luke (name was Lukanish, but he abbreviated it to Luke). They took it over. “Tricky Dick” was a football star, and Joe was kind of a promoter type. And they had it in there, and they opened a casino with everything. But they were overextended and havin' a tough time, which I realized 'cause I used to hang around there. So I leased half of their store that they weren't usin' much. And they needed the money. So I leased half of it, and to protect myself, I got an option with the landlord, who were the—oh, what's their name?—real good friends—. We got along fine—Joe and Victor [Saturno] and I. And I went to them and just told 'em the truth, that I was gonna lease this place; and I wasn't too sure how the—. They weren't too happy with Joe Lukanish, anyway, for some reason. And I said I wanted to put a Bingo in there, and I wanted to be protected in case the operators

in there defaulted that I could take over the lease. And they said, “Fine,” and they just gave me a letter or something to that effect. And then Joe and “Tricky Dick” did default. And so I took it over and got the lease. Then I let it sit there for quite a while, 'cause it was wartime or soon became wartime—I just paid the rent on it. [I] left it vacant there or put little things in from time to time but short term. And then I worked out a good lease with the Saturnos. And they were so easy to work with; you just said it the way it was, and they went right along. Anything you wanted to do—remodel—fine, you know. They were wonderful guys.

Then after the war or well, the war was on—we made plans to put a casino in there. And then you couldn't do much; we could do a little but not very much. But we could do a lot of planning. And then as soon as the war was over, then we immediately started to put in the casino.

So we started right away, and we opened the following June—'46, I believe—with a casino.

Then staying on the Saturnos with this casino (which I'll talk about a little later), I went to 'em—they had plenty of money. Their father'd owned a lot of property, and they always had plenty of money. But I went to them and just asked them about selling the building, and I thought they'd laugh at me or something. And they said, no, they'd think about it. And we talked numbers, and we didn't take too long to arrive at a number, and they said, yeah, they'd sell it, which really surprised me. And it was on my terms—which I had some money then. But they were very—whatever I wanted to do was fine. And then they took quite a bit of the money—not all of it but some of it—and you probably read in the paper about it.

They went back to the little country where they came from, and they gave two thousand

dollars or something to every member of the little community. That was within the last ten years. And Joe died. Victor's still alive, and I run into him on the street, send him a Christmas card, and he—I wish I had it—well, I have it somewhere. For his Christmas card this year, he wrote on it: "Merry Christmas, Bill and your wife" (he's met her) . And he said, "You have done a great deal" or "an awful lot" or however he said it "to improve Reno. Keep up the good work" da da da—real, real friendly.

Anyway, we opened the casino, and we had all kinds of problems 'cause that wasn't our business. We'd had a little small casino in the Blackout, which—did I mention that? Well, I better intersperse that.

[Chuckles] We had the Bingo parlor—the first one— and then the successful one. Then when the war came along and the Reno Club was owned by a Japanese, then they had to close immediately because of the war feeling, although the operator was American born—Freddie Aoyama.

We made a lease with him. They owned the property, and we leased it on 'em—yearly basis, I believe—and operated it as a Bingo parlor. And we were on both sides of Harolds Club at that time. And we had—I know on the north one, I remember I asked Pappy Smith one time—I said, "What would you think of cuttin' a door between these two places?"

And so how he operated—I just caught him in the Harolds Club, and he said, "Let's take a look." And so he went, and we walked through Harolds Club, and he said, "Where would it go?"

And I said, "Well, come around." So we went in the Bingo, and I showed him where it would be good—for me— where it would fit, where it wouldn't interfere with anything— and about a six-foot opening or eight feet.

Then he said, "Fine." And then when we left, he kinda stepped it off to the front door; and then he went around to Harolds and stepped it out—into Harolds, where he hit about where the door would be, and it didn't interfere with him. And he said, "I think that's a good idea. Let's do it." And that was all we did; we just went, with permission from our landlords, of course, and cut the door. Which was really good for both of us, because the people could run back, and we're noncompetitive—they had no Bingo and a lot of slots, and we had Bingo and very few slots; and they had a bar, and we didn't have a bar. And so people really circulated. It was very good for both of us.

And then when we got the Reno Club, which was the Japanese's place, I went to Smith again. And I said, "Hey, I'm on the other side. Let's cut another door."

And he said, "Fine." And we did the same thing and cut another door.

Then we started serving drinks to our—. See, we didn't have the two-for-a-dime place, which was high class—high a class of Bingo as you could have; and we had a good one, but our competition was the Club Fortune, who had a bar. And they served drinks to their customers, and we couldn't do it, and it was a business disadvantage. So how could we serve— well, we didn't want to mess with a liquor license and all that to start. So we talked to Harolds, and we could—we did it in the other place—we could go into Harolds; we could have a waitress go in and go to the bar and buy a drink and take it in to give it to our customers, which worked, but not very well because like on a busy day, and she's fighting the crowd, and the bar was, you know, quite a ways. So it wasn't good.

And then I'd had a bar in Venice. I kinda liked the bar business a little bit, I think

probably because I liked to hang around it and drink—I don't know.

But Murray Jacobs had a clothing store there, and he and I were good friends. So I talked to him. I think liquor licenses were impossible at that time; I think they'd frozen the licenses. Or no, they hadn't, but I really didn't have room in the Reno Club (that was the name of it) for a bar, and Murray had this building next door to his clothing store, so we, meeting and talking, we became pretty good friends. And he was tired of the clothing business; he'd inherited it from his father and been in it forever, and he was ready to go to somethin' else. So we figured out a deal where the front part of the store would be liquor store, which Murray had, and in the rear would be a bar. And there'd be a partition so that there was really no connection. But we could operate on one license, which was important—you saved a little money.

So we went ahead with that deal. And I put the bar in the back, which was the "Blackout," we named it; it was because of the war, and it was a real dark bar. Then there was an entrance from the alley (let's see, that's Lincoln Alley, isn't it?) and also from the Bingo. And we served drinks in the Bingo, which was the reason or purpose. But then it got to be rather popular while we brought in a pianist that I had working in Venice. And his name was Jack McCarg; he was known as "Jackson." He was very good. And there wasn't much entertainment in Reno at the time. Jackson didn't go to work till about midnight or eleven o'clock, so, it kinda became the place to go in Reno for quite a while there.

And I met—surprising—shows you how things work out—I met more of Reno's leading citizens in the Blackout than I had in all the time I'd been in Reno 'cause I just didn't, you know—I didn't socialize; and the places I hung out, they didn't hang out. I didn't belong

to the Kiwanis, or anything. But I met—gee, I just met everybody in the Blackout.

So that worked pretty good—gave me a taste of the bar business. And then we put in a "21" game just to kinda feel our way and the Crap table. And I watched it very closely. We had a few slot machines in there, and I did tell about gettin' robbed.

But I got a taste of the casino business in the Blackout. So then this other came along in the other location; and then we had some money, and I felt there was room for another casino in Reno. So then we opened Harrah's in June of '46— June twentieth, I think it was. Bob Ring remembers all those dates exactly.

FROM HARRAH'S CLUB TO HARRAH'S, INC., 1946-1978

It takes a lot of money to run a casino 'cause you have to have quite a large bankroll, and that place cost so much to put in. Then I borrowed from everybody that I could. And then I opened with a rather short bankroll. And then we had some dishonest help. Wayne Martin was the manager.

Well, during the war, I got in with Virgil Smith and Bill [Williams]. Virgil Smith and Bill and Wayne Martin. Well, see, Virgil Smith had Colbrandt's you remember. [Bill] was a neat guy. He's still livin' here; he retired way back.

But anyway, I used to hang around Colbrandt's; I was a friend of theirs. And it was a nice place to go, and I had no connection with them, and I liked Virgil Smith a lot. And we kinda palled around together. And then Virgil got drafted and had to go away, and then Bill ran the place. And Wayne Martin, who also worked there, he ran the "21" game. And then he tried to stay out (which is a long story); and then he couldn't pass anything, he was so sick [chuckles].

But anyway, the three of us were left; I was 4-F, so I didn't have to go. But we got a

bar—John's Bar—we rented that, then ran a few games in there. And that was a four-way partnership; we got Virgil Smith in on it because we felt he should have it even though he was away, and he was one of us.

John's Bar was semi-successful; it made money, but you couldn't help makin' money. But I learned something real fast. I'd never had any partners up till that except my father was associated—we weren't really partners—but he got difficult at times. Then when I got on my own, I could just make decisions and just run along. So with this partnership—. John's Bar was, oh, twenty feet wide. And I've always thought in terms of expansion, and there was a store next door, and they weren't doin' very good; I forget what business it was. It was another twenty feet (or maybe twenty-five and twenty-five) and it became available. And so if I'd been on my own, I'd've just grabbed it and torn the wall out and doubled the size of my place. But Wayne would go along with me pretty well and this Bill [Williams], he was real conservative. He was a gambler, but he really—a dime was a dime to him. And he

didn't know, da da da, and "Should we lease it?" And the rent was two hundred or four hundred, and "Well, maybe we can get it for three-seventy-five," and all. So it took—we could've gotten the lease in a day—it took two months. And of course, the war's goin' on; the town's full of people. And we finally got it. So then I wanted to tear the wall out. And you couldn't do anything in those days—everything was frozen—but you could do things. And the way you did 'em, you just went ahead; you hired a contractor you knew and made your plans, got all your plumbing, your light fixtures, but the big thing was the wall. And they could stop you; some kind of a board could issue—and they had to come from Salt Lake or somethin'. So the trick was just to get it done before they knew about it. So that's what I wanted to do. And I'd done other jobs like that, and everybody in town had done that. You just did it, and the next day it was done; and they—"Hey, what's going on?"

"Well, it's done, and so forget it."

So Bill—no, no, he didn't want to do it that way. And he wanted to go to the city. I said, "It's not gonna work, Bill."

But we got a contract, and we got—and you couldn't get bids, even if you wanted to get bids. And I said, "This is wartime. You just—you do it." So we got a contractor, and then the contractor had to go to the city hall to get a building permit. And I said, "You get a building permit, you're going to tip your mitt."

And he said, "Oh no. I don't want to get in trouble."

So we got a building permit, and automatically we got a stay from the government that—"Do not tear that wall out. Do not do anything." And once you got one of those, you were dead, 'cause if you did, then you were in violation of a whole bunch of

serious stuff. So we sat there for the duration of the war with this vacant room next door, when we could've had it full of slot machines and "21" tables and all sorts of stuff.

Anyway, I learned real fast. I said, "Boy, I sure don't want any partners unless I have to." And you know, there's a little good in nearly everything, and that was the good that I got out of that because if it'd been a real happy partnership, I might've cut them in on the casino when I opened it because I needed money. But because of that experience, I had no partner. And I borrowed money from people and everything, but I just paid 'em, and I paid 'em real good and you know—big interest, and maybe extra. But no partners.

But anyway, Wayne and I became friends, and he helped me. As he wasn't in the army, he helped me plan the casino. And he became the Number One guy in the casino because he understood gambling. And we planned it, and it was a real beautiful place. It was far superior to anything that had been done up till then. But operating all the games, instead of one or two games, we had, you know, two or three Craps and six or seven "21s" and a Roulette and a horse book and things. And we couldn't watch it all. I didn't know how to watch, anyway, 'cause it wasn't my field. And Wayne could work twelve hours a day. He couldn't be everywhere, so we did get cheated. It was from the inside and the outside. We had many crossroaders coming in, and we could handle those pretty good, although we got cheated a few times. But then also, we had some crooked dealers that were goin', so it was really very tough. And at times there, I wondered if we were going to make it, actually.

Eddie Sahati came in—we had a Faro Bank—and won forty thousand dollars one time. And I don't think our bankroll was a hundred; and when somebody took forty, why it was pretty scary.

Then we finally got it straightened out. And just by firing him [points] and firing him and—like people say, you know—like I'll show people through the casino at Tahoe or something on the Fourth of July when it's just huge and thousands of people, and "Well, how can you handle all this? How can you keep from getting robbed blind?"

And the answer is, no way you could do it. You just couldn't open it up and hire a bunch of people and not get robbed blind. But over the years you have a Wayne Martin, and you have a Bob Ring, and you have a Lloyd Dyer and all, so pretty soon everybody's honest but two or three people. Well, then it's pretty simple. But to start out with all new people, then it's pretty difficult.

But then did I tell you about Dr. Cantlon and going to Stanley and everything?

Well, that's a cute story. We finally opened in June, and it was really touch and go through July. And then it got straightened out, and Wayne Martin was there, and my father was here—he was a good watcher—and so we were making money. There was no question that the place was going to be a success. But in the meantime, I drank a lot anyway. And then because of the stress of opening, I drank more than normal. Then no rest. And I got where I actually had the shakes; I was like that [trembles hand]. And I was—how old was I—'46, I was thirty-five. So I knew there was something wrong, and you know, you don't like to admit it. But I went—and Dr. Vernon Cantlon was my doctor, because he's the one that set my neck after the accident, which—I went into that, didn't I?

No.

Oh [laughs]. Okay, I'll go back to it. But he had become my doctor. So I went to him (and we were "Bill" and "Vernon") , and he

said, "What do you want?"—you know, 'cause I was young—I wasn't sick or anything.

And I said, "Look at me!" [trembles hand]. And I said, "What can you do?" You know, it was embarrassing—around people my hands were shaking.

And he said, "Oh, I can fix that."

I said, "Give me a pill. Fix that."

And he said, "No, I can fix it, but I won't give you a pill."

And I said, "Well, that's good."

And he said, "Will you do what I say?"

And I said, "Yes."

He said, "Now, wait a minute." He said, "I want to get it straight." He said, "I can fix that, but you have to do as I say."

And I said, "I'll do it, I'll do it!"

And he said, "Okay. That's a promise?"

"Yeah, that's a promise."

He said, "Go fishin'."

And I—"That's the most ridiculous thing I ever heard! I'm a busy—" da da da, just a da da da da, da da da da da—"fishin'—that's the dumbest thing—."

He said, "You said you'd do it, didn't you?"

And I said, "Yeah, I did." You know, I respected him, so I thought, "Well, I got to go fishin'." And things were in pretty good shape. So I bought a trailer. Well, I always loved cars, and I had this nice Packard 12 convertible. I found a real neat two-wheel trailer that I bought. It was used, but it was a super trailer. And I hooked onto the back of the Packard and took my girlfriend, and we just took off. I didn't know where I was going. And [I] drove east, and then when I got to Elko, I went north to Idaho. And I got to Twin Falls, and there was a fellow there, neon sign man, Mel—. We bought neon signs from him. He started in Twin Falls, and he was quite a hustler, except he was a boozier. And he expanded; he was very successful. And he sold neon signs pretty cheap. There was one other company

that were real expensive, and he sold 'em for a fourth of the other people, and, as we were on a shoestring, why, we started dealing with him. So he built all the signs for us, and they weren't the best, but they were sure, you know, affordable. So we became real good friends. He would work with you, and, "We gotta have it day after tomorrow," and he would do it somehow. So I liked him very much. He was a good friend. And his headquarters were in Twin Falls.

So when I got to Twin Falls, I went by to see him. And he said, "Oh, hi, Bill, old buddy!" and "Let's have a drink," and it was noon or something. And so we had a drink, and he said, "Well, what the hell are you doin' here?"

And I said, "Well, you're not gonna believe it, but—da da da, my doctor, and I told him I'd go fishin'." So I said, "I heard that there was a fish or two in Idaho." I said, "Here I am, but where do you catch a fish?"

And he says, "Damn if I know." But he said, "I got guy that works on the metal cases for those signs—sheet metal man—that goes fishin' all the time. And he comes back with em like that [two-foot gesture]."

And so he called the guy in—shop out in the back where they're poundin', and this fella came in with his overalls. And "Oh, Mel—" (that fellow's name was Mel Cosgriff—it's Cosgriff Neon).

So anyway, the fellow came in, and Mel said, "Where do you catch all those big fish?"

And the fella said, "Stanley."

So I said, "Well, where the hell is Stanley?" So we got out a map, and then I saw where Stanley was.

So I took off and drove—I don't know if I went to Stanley that day or not. And I might've; I drove real fast. Even with the trailer, I'd go eighty miles an hour. I think we may have—or the next day—it doesn't matter. But I remember it was so funny. I got

to Ketchum (why, I think we stayed maybe in Ketchum), which was a neat town. They had gambling there, then—and bars and all. And then Stanley is sixty miles north. It was dirt road in those days.

So anyway, we pulled into Stanley about oh, six o'clock at night (it was dusk) in this Packard; and it was a pretty classy car—this great big Packard and this fancy trailer, and my girlfriend was a flashy blonde. And I had on a—I'll never forget that—a gabardine suit that I liked very much, and it was what today would be a leisure suit. And it was tailored beautifully; I'd had it made in Hollywood and fit me beautifully. And I had little Weejun shoes; I looked like Hollywood Boulevard. And here I am up in the middle of Idaho in a real rough town.

And I got in town; and I walked in this bar, which was Archie Danner's bar and was—became a friend over the years. It was the first bar I saw, so I went in there. And so here's these old cowboys standin' around lookin'; and here I come in with my fancy little shoes and my gabardine, and they all—"Ooh, look at this!"

But I had the blonde, and she looked pretty good. But all my life I for some reason just knew how to handle myself in a bar—and not show off or anything. I would have a drink, and I would buy everyone else a drink—and not rude or anything. I would politely say, "Would you—" you know—"Would you like to have a drink?" And not [gruffly] "Give him a drink!"—I would say "Would you?"

Well, then, we—my girlfriend and I—had a drink and the bartender, Archie Danner. And I said, "Would you ask anyone else if they'd have a drink?"

And he asked them, and, "Well, yeah! Hell, yes!" And so then I bought another round, another round and not because I was tryin' to make points or anything; it was just fun. That's

the way I like to be in a bar; I like to buy a lot of drinks, and I had plenty of money.

So it wasn't too long and I was a pretty popular guy, in spite of my gabardine suit and my Weejuns! And so then I got acquainted and of course, people drifted in and out of the bar. Archie Danner and I became pretty close friends, and we were—he just got killed this last year, a couple of months ago—friends of his wife and all of his kids and everything—he had about seven kids.

But, we became acquainted, and I told him my story, you know. I came up here, I would like to catch a fish, and I said, "What I want to do—," I said, "one reason I bought the trailer," I said, "I would like to go out and park it by a stream." I said, "Maybe it's lazy of me, but it's just something I've dreamed of all my life. If I'm gonna go fishin', I'd like to—I want to be all by myself—nobody within twenty miles. And some fish in the stream, and get up in the morning and have my breakfast and then walk twelve feet and start fishing and maybe catch a fish." I said, "That's my idea of havin' fun."

So Archie thought awhile, and he said, "Well, there's Elk Creek up there. It's pretty good." He said, "That's not too far, and fishin' isn't too bad," and so-and-so. And he drew me a little map how to get there and—not too good a map. And I'd had a bit to drink by then, but like still, in those days, I could handle quite a bit.

So we started out for Elk Creek, and it's about twenty miles, I think, or fifteen. And I'd have trouble finding it today, but that night I think I only made one wrong turn, which I discovered immediately. So we drove right to it and found a real neat place for the trailer and parked there, and it was exactly what I wanted. It was totally isolated and just beautiful, and this stream running through—there weren't too many trout in

the stream, but that didn't matter 'cause then we went elsewhere. But we parked there, and we liked it a lot. So we unhooked the trailer, and I think we stayed there—oh yeah, well, that was the funny thing. When I left on the doctor's orders, I said, "Well, I'll do what you told me to, but," I said, "things are so busy and so much goin' on," I said, "I can only stay a week."

So he said, "Well, that's better than nothin'." So I had planned to be gone a week. But I just enjoyed it so much up there. And I would go to Stanley every day and drink, and buy little groceries—we cooked in the trailer and everything. And then we'd go have dinner there.

But I called Reno—"How's business?" And business was just fine. I called every other day at least—and business was good. They were makin' money—everything's fine. So my week turned into six weeks I was gone, before I went back. And I spent all of it in Stanley. And we stayed out there by the river for about three weeks. 'course, by then I was well acquainted, and we were fishin' all over the area. And it was quite a drive. We'd go to town every night and hang around the bars till one or two, and then we'd drive back to the trailer—which was fun and no trouble. But then we got to thinkin', "Well, why do all that drivin'?" We spent an awful lot of time right in Stanley. That's our headquarters."

So then this Archie had some property there; he had a little motel. And so he said, "Why don't you bring it in here?" So we brought the trailer in and parked it in the corner of his property there and just lived the same way. That was where we lived; that was our headquarters instead of Elk Creek, twenty miles. So we stayed there six weeks.

And when I came back—although I drank all the time I was there, I was still walkin' a lot. And I had a big pot on me, even at that

age. But all the hills I climbed and just—you couldn't help movin' around no matter how lazy you were. I think my weight had gone from two hundred and somethin' down to 190. I think I lost ten or fifteen pounds. I lost my pot, and I lost my shakes. When I came back, everybody was just amazed 'cause I was slender and tan and no shakes and—. And of course, that was Stanley—and then I loved Stanley and just kept going back there ever since.

You said something about your broken neck.

That was in September of '42. The war was on, and I was playin' around. And I remember it was '42 'cause I had a '42 Packard that I was very proud of.

I had a friend of mine—was Monte somethin' (I can give you his name if you want it). He's still alive. But I was tryin' to stay out of the Army (this was before I got—well, I wasn't 4-F till after I broke my neck). I was married, but I didn't have any children, so I was 3-A. Then they were really in the papers and all, and it was getting—the war going on, and it looked like I was gonna be 1-A within six months, which I really didn't want to be, like a lot of people. And so how do you stay out of the Army?

And at that time, they had a—and it worked, too. You could become a ground school instructor. And they had courses that you took to become a ground school instructor. And because of wartime, why you—you could—if you really learned it, then you could get a job being a ground school instructor, which deferred you. And you taught young flyers all their ground school—navigation and meteorology, and all that stuff. So that sounded like a good way to stay out, so there was a school here. It was just here for that purpose; someone had opened a ground

school. So I went to ground school, and I did a fair job. I understood a lot of it anyway, so I wasn't havin' too much trouble. And there was one instructor that was kinda spooky, and then there was this other instructor that I liked a lot. (As I said I'll dig up his name if you want me to, but—.) He and I went out quite a bit. One night after school (the school was at night)—in the evening, why I said—we were drinkin', and I remember Rita had a Green Lantern down there. Rita was a good friend of mine; I kinda liked her. I used to hang around there a little bit—not too much, but I liked to go down and have a drink and maybe fool around but not too—.

But anyway, this fella—I said, "Hey, do you want to go to the Green Lantern?" And he'd never heard of it. And I said, "Oh, it's a neat place."

So I called up, and it was kinda late. And they were still around, so I said, "Okay, I'll be down in a little bit." And we started out, and I was really drunk. I drove across the bridge—I just maneuvered wrong, and hit the bridge. And I wasn't really goin' very fast, but I hit it. It was a steel post I hit, and in fact I bent it. In fact, it was bent there till they tore it down late last year; so I could still see where I bent the bridge.

So my car stopped instantly, and I broke my neck. And the fortunate part of it was I was really lucky. And my friend, he went through the windshield. He got all cut up—but not—you know, just bloody and took a zillion stitches, but his life wasn't in any danger.

But my neck was broken, and I was unconscious, of course. And the fortunate part of it was, it was right, you know, just a few feet from the police station. And they heard the crash, so the police came out, and here's the car and the guy there, and the fellas that took me out of the car had been properly instructed. They didn't twist my neck, which

they could've paralyzed me. They lifted me very gently onto a stretcher and took me to Washoe Medical.

And I had no doctor, then, and so Vernon Cantlon was the doctor that was on call. He was a young doctor here, then. And he came in, and he was an expert on that. And as I think looking back, he was as good as anybody in Reno at setting necks. He had a new procedure that was untried up till then, I guess. And that was, instead of a cast, they drilled holes in your skull [points to temples]—shallow holes—and put like ice tongs on you, and then with a weight on the end of the bed on a roller—which sounds terrible, but it wasn't 'cause there was no—you didn't feel a thing. The beauty of it is you wore no cast, 'cause there was always that tension. And you stayed in bed, and there was always that tension. So it was very new then. So I didn't have the cast with all the itching and all the discomfort.

So anyway, I was in the hospital for nine weeks, I think it was, and fully recovered. And of course, I was automatically 4-F. And then this Monte (whatever his name was)—they patched him up, and they did an excellent job. They sewed him up, so today you can't see a scar. And of course, I was concerned—well, we were good friends. But still good friends, when there's somethin' like that, they, you know—sometimes there's a big lawsuit and this and that. And I paid all of Monte's expenses in the hospital. And I didn't ask for a release or anything; we were just friends, and I told him, "I'm sorry."

And he said, "Hell, we were both drunk." And he never, ever did a thing. And today he lives in Illinois, and we send each other Christmas cards and he writes on his what he's doin' now and da da da da da.

So although I was out of action for six weeks, I could, you know, I could keep in

touch, and Bob Ring'd come to see me every day. That's when my father said—it was really funny what he said. He was mad at me. He didn't come to see me in the hospital; he kept in touch. Then when I got out, he came up; and he said, "You know, you were a goddamn fool for breakin' your neck. But," he says, "as long as you had to do it," he said, "I'm glad you did it now!" [chuckles]—because it made me 4-F.

And Dr. Cantlon—that was a funny story.

He was Edwin's older brother, but he looked younger. He was one of those people that had kind of a baby face. And of course, in '42, he couldn't've been much over thirty-something. He'd gone to Harvard—I think—medical school. He only practiced a couple of years. But he looked like he was about eighteen.

So anyway, why, they heard I was hurt, and of course, Bob Ring rushed to the hospital. And I was in the operating room or whatever, where they were puttin' the tongs on me. So it took an hour or so, and everybody's real nervous. So then Cantlon came out. And Bob Ring's waiting. Cantlon went, and I guess he knew who Bob was or something. So he went to him; he said, "Mr. Harrah's gonna be okay." He said, "He's broke his neck, but it's gonna-it's gonna take a couple of months and he's gonna be okay."

So Bob—this young punk is tellin' Bob this, and Bob said, "Well, thank you very much, but I'd like to talk to the doctor" [laughing]. Cantlon had been through that enough times that it didn't bother him any more, you know. And then over the years we all would have dinner together until Cantlon died; why, we'd always tell that joke about Bob Ring, who wanted to talk to the doctor!

But that was really good in a way—I mean it taught me a lot of things. But also, I had drank every day for years; that was a way

of life. And being in the hospital there and flat on my back—and I'd said I didn't want a drink and couldn't drink if I wanted to. And I loved to read, anyway, so I got caught up on my reading and had a wonderful rest and no liquor. So when I came out of there—although I was wobbly on my feet at first, but of course, I got over that real fast—but I'd lost my pot, I'd lost a lot of weight, and no more shakes, and just—it was wonderful. Although I started drinkin' again, it was quite different.

You really were lucky there.

Yeah, I was, 'cause I could've been paralyzed or killed.

And lucky with the business, too, having somebody who could take over.

Oh yeah. Bob was just—you know, he handled my money better than I did.

Yeah. By September, you know, when I was in Stanley, and then when I came back, we had not a huge bankroll, but we were in good shape. And then our first winter, things slowed down a lot more than they do now. And we had to learn to cut down. But there was no doubt of the place being successful, except occasionally, like a Sahati would come in. "Nick the Greek" played with us a little bit, although he never won anything from us. But we had some pretty big Crap games, at least big for us at the time, which was kinda scary.

After the first winter and the next summer, we knew we were established then. By then, we'd learned an awful lot about what to do and what not to do. So it was successful, and I guess in the first year, I paid off my loans and all, and I think we were in pretty good shape.

Well, of course, the big thing was to avoid the cheaters, and then the other thing was to watch your expenses very closely because expenses are extremely high in the casino 'cause everybody's paid quite high compared to the surrounding jobs. So just a few days of very slow business and with a, you know, quite a big nut [daily expense] (I'd had no idea what it was in those days, but it had to be in the thousands), why you could get in trouble real fast.

And I remember Wayne Martin—I remember one, it was a severe winter. It was either our first winter or our second winter. But there was snow in the streets of Reno. They had to use snowplows; it was very heavy. And I came down one day, and there was so much snow that people just stayed away from downtown, and you could park anywhere on Second Street and just about anywhere on Virginia Street. Then, they were streets that had been plowed. There was just nobody around. Then I went in the club—I think it was Wayne's day off (and he didn't have many of those either) —and I went in the club, and there wasn't a customer. And here we had all our dealers and all our bartenders and all—. Of course, it was maybe ten in the morning, when you wouldn't expect much in January or February. But I thought, "Brother! This rate and our eight-thousand-dollar nut" or whatever it was—I said, "It isn't going to take us long to get out of business here." And that's something I learned that's almost true today. Many executives in any line of business are very slow to act, or quite often are very slow to act. And we have the same problem here. Just like today Lloyd Dyer and I were talkin' about something; he and I had felt it was a good idea the other day, or within a month, and it should have been done in a week, and it isn't done yet. And he said, "We're too slow to act."

And I said, "You're right, you're right."

But anyway, it's just—even real dedicated—like Bob Ring, who's as dedicated as anybody, will still be slow to act in a way, because you may have to lay somebody off or lay 'em off a few days, and fire the janitor and, you know—to cut a nut, you gotta cut it. And most people don't want to. They want to quit spendin' the money, but they don't want to hurt anybody, and usually you have to hurt somebody.

So anyway, there's no business and that. And I called Wayne Martin, and I said, "Come on down here. We got a big problem."

And he—"What is it?" He thought we were gettin' cheated or something.

I said, "Just there's no business, and we got a big nut here. We got to take a big look at this thing."

He came down, and Wayne was really super guy, in that you get the message to him—which he got right away—and he'd just start workin' on it. And he said, "Well, we don't really need that; we don't really need that"—and he cut her way down and laid off—and laid off his friends and everything. We were still in business. We had a Crap table, and we had a couple of "21" tables. I think our Faro Bank, maybe we closed it on the graveyard. We just cut way down where it was a real healthy little nut we had that we could maybe not meet it every day, but we could—you know, there was no question we were going to stay in business. He also worked on being able to expand it. Saturday came and we put more games in, there'd be some business, and he'd get some dealers; so he did a super job there.

The two things—you know, a casino as a business is, well, there's many, but one is to not get cheated. And then also, like any business, watch your nut extremely close, and vary it according to the amount of business, or you can just get eaten up. So when we had that in control, then it was just—we had promotions

of various kinds and so on and still played with our Bingos.

[Wayne] was just a wonderful man, one of the nicest men I ever knew; but he was born with two and a half strikes on him, health-wise, 'cause he had a bad back—he walked around kinda with a shuffle and bent over. He worked in—was married, but no children. And in the war, why, he got a job in San Francisco in a defense industry for several years, which was a big change for him. Born and raised in Nevada and have to go to San Francisco and live in San Francisco, work, and fight the traffic and the San Francisco people—he just hated it. And after a couple of years, he was drafted anyway and was instantly 4-F because of the many things wrong with him. Then he came back to work; and then, of course, that worked in perfectly for my plans, because he was available to open the place.

But besides his back he had—I can't remember all the—it's hard to think of anything that you can have that he didn't have. And he didn't have any bad habits; he drank but not to excess, and I don't think he even smoked. But you name it, he had it, and most of it was just inherited. So finally he died quite young, I can say now—I think he was probably in his fifties. And I don't remember what he died of, but it was just something that he had that killed him like—(well, I don't remember; I guess it doesn't matter)

The war was over, then the Japs wanted their place back, which I tried to argue with them there a little bit 'cause I had a good thing; but they got it back okay. And then I still had the other one, which later—that's when Pappy Smith made the deal with Chase.

Oh, Dr. Chase owned the building at Virginia and Douglas Alley (that's Douglas, isn't it? And Lincoln goes this way). He'd

owned it, and it had been in his family for many years. He was a—I forget what kind of a doctor he was, but he lived in Los Angeles. He didn't come around; he was just a name, and Mr. Yori was his agent here. So Yori was the man you dealt with, and Yori was very slow.

So we had the Bingo in the corner, and Chase was the landlord (Yori was his agent), and three-year lease; and at the end of two years maybe I'd get another three-year lease. And Harolds Club was next door; they owned their building. So then they were doing real good, and they got the property behind. So then Harolds Club wanted to expand some more, and they wanted to get where we were. I didn't know about that at the time, and we were friendly. And it was all Raymond I. then; Harold was around, and Raymond A. was around, but Raymond I. was The Man. And we were good friends, as I said, with our doors and all. But then I went to Yori for my new lease, and I was havin' a little problem. And then somehow I got wind that there was something going on, that Harolds was tryin' to get my lease or a lease on the property that I had—a master lease on the building, or buy the building.

So I called Dr. Chase, and either he came up or I went down to see him—and I don't know, maybe both. But I was in Los Angeles, and I was in his office. And I said, "I'm real concerned. I hear that Raymond I. or Harolds Club is talkin' to you about a lease on the building. And I'd be out on my ear; and how 'bout it?"

And he said, "No, Bill, don't you worry about it." He said, "You've been an excellent tenant for these six years or eight years, whatever it is. You've been absolutely excellent. You've kept your property up good and clean and nice and paid your rent right on the day, and we couldn't ask for a better—a little raise once in while, and you didn't squawk—you

just took the raise. We love you as a tenant. Just don't even think about it."

So I said, "Oh, wow. That's wonderful. That's nice, fine, good."

Then the rumors kept persisting. My father was around, and I kept him fully informed. And I said, "We may have a problem here. It looks like—and I don't know what's goin' on, but I think they're workin' on a master lease." So then we heard the papers were being drawn and that Raymond I. had gone to L.A. to sign the papers. So I got that, and it was pretty accurate, too—I don't know where I got it. And so I called my father in Los Angeles, and I said, "Get up to Dr. Chase's office right away and see what's goin' on up there." And my father had been to see him. So my father went up, and Raymond I. was there and inside, da-da-da-da-da.

And so he came out, and they were shakin' hands and all. And my father said, "I want to see you, Dr. Chase."

"Yes, what about?"

"Well, Bill's concerned."

And he said, "Oh, I'm sorry, Mr. Harrah. But," he said, "I've leased the place to Mr. Smith, and you'll have to deal with him."

And so my father said—and either Chase had told him and me—he said, "Well, you told us that we had nothing to worry about, that we were excellent tenants, and we could stay there as long as we wanted."

And then Chase answered, which is a real tricky answer. And I've heard it from other sources; it's somethin' to watch out for. "Yes, I said that. But, Mr. Smith (I'm an old man now, or I'm getting up in years)—Mr. Smith made me such a tremendous offer for the property that for the sake of my children and grandchildren, I couldn't afford to turn it down—for their sake." See, he wasn't doing anything against me; he was doin' somethin' for his kids. So it solved his conscience,

but it knocked me out of the ballpark. But fortunately I'd had the other place down the street, and then I got to stay there for a couple of years while they were makin' plans. I didn't get kicked out right away, but it was quite an education.

Did that create some bad feelings between you and the Smiths after all those years?

Yeah, it did, yeah. Yeah, it was dirty pool. And I didn't want to get in a fight with Raymond I.—he was too big—but I said, "Gee whiz. You know, we're good neighbors here, and all of a sudden—" He said, "Bill, I had to get the place, and you got down there, you got—you know, da-da-da—you've got this and that." So I maintained my friendship with him, but I didn't feel as good, you know. I respected him for his business ability, and we worked together till he died on all sorts of things—politics, you know.

He was a great one for the John Birch Society. He used to come and see me on that and bring all the books and talk to me for an hour. And I felt much like he did, which I told him. I said, "I'm for balanced budgets, I'm for this, that, and the other." But he didn't have anyone else to talk to, I don't believe, that would listen; so I would listen, and so—. And I don't regret it a bit; it was an hour of my time about every two months and to listen to Pappy Smith talk about government goin' to hell and the damn this-and-that. And it was good for him; it didn't hurt me any. He was okay, except it was kinda—. Then when you are competitors, why, you push and shove; so I'd've probably done the same thing if I'd've been him.

You had some other neighbors in this area up here— some other casinos like Fitzgerald's.

And there was a hamburger stand in there for a while.

Yeah, that was George Johnson—he was on the corner. Of course, I beat him out of the lease, so I guess I couldn't—. He and I were good friends. We opened about the same time. George Johnson—he's now in Sacramento, you know. He has a couple of motels down there. I see him once in a while. He's just the same as he always was. I remember it was the hamburgers for a dime, and he did very well there. But then I needed that, and so I went to Yori and offered more rent and really beat him out of it. But we stayed pretty good friends. We see each other.

But let's see, there was that and the—. So we had the whole corner, then, enlarged our Bingo, and we had several years of that. And then next was Harolds, and then next was the Reno Club, which I mentioned. Next was Murray Jacobs, and next was Robbin's, which is now the Nevada Club, although I think Robbin still owns the building—part of it. And then Joe and Pick Hobson had the next building. That was the Frontier, which we later bought out. And then we were next and then the bank.

Joe and Pick, they bought that building. It was terrible, as I remember, at the time. See, they made a lot of money in Hawthorne during the war. And they came to town with several hundred thousand dollars, and I didn't have that kind of money. And that building was for sale for thirty or forty thousand dollars, and they bought it—maybe fifty.

And later we bought a lease from them for a million and somethin'—we paid for a lease—which put Joe and Pick on the right road. And then, of course, we had an option in it to buy it, which we always—to get that. And then later—well, when we leased it, then

we tore the wall out. And then that was a whole new ball game 'cause we were, I guess, twenty-five feet.

[Looking at map] Yeah, Murray had his thirteen feet, and then we had a falling out. He got to hangin' around the bar, and I think he thought I was makin' a lot more money than I was. And he kinda tried to roust me in a way, which was unpleasant. We had a few words, and (what did I do? I did somethin')—. Oh yeah, in fact it got where it didn't amount to much any more, and he would become real tough. He was my landlord, and he was real ornery. And the time had come to get out, and he wanted to keep my bar, which I wanted. And we didn't have any agreement on it, and we just—it was a handshake sort of a deal. So I was kinda mad at him.

So I went in there—I hired a crew, and I went in there one night—it was kinda fun. And we took the bar out and put it on a truck and drove away. And then when he came down the next day, all he had was a vacant room, which really shook him up. I had the right to do that. And we had a lawsuit, even, which didn't get anywhere.

He's a good guy, really—and he made his deal with Fitz [Lincoln Fitzgerald] and became a zillionaire overnight. And we're real good friends now, which shows you how things work out 'cause we liked each other, anyway. And then when we got our problem out of the way, why, we—. I see him two or three times a year, and like, any day I can get a call that Murray Jacobs is out in front. He spends a lot of time in Phoenix. He lives in Reno and a lot of time in Phoenix, plays a lot of golf, and say, "Murray's out in front." I'll—"Bring him in. So he'll come in and sit and talk for two hours—just what's goin' on, and the old days, his dad, and my dad, and then our health, and are we havin' any fun, and you know, we just—. It's not too often when you're friends

with somebody and you have a fallin' out that you go back and become friends again. But he's one—he's a real good friend.

Did I tell you the time Hopper jumped all over me? Where our property was over? When we were remodeling to put in the first nice club—and of course, we were next to the bank. And that was an old building built on no foundation or anything. You know how they were built, just on rubble. So when we got in there—and of course, the bank—. Whenever anybody's remodeling next to you, you better watch and see what they're doin'; they can mess you up. So they were properly paying attention. And we're workin' away very diligently, and old Hopper was the president, who I wasn't very close to—it was Mr. Hopper which—well, we shouldn't've been.

And so he thought we were—well, he wanted to be sure everything was right. So he had the property surveyed, and he found that our building [Saturno building] was either ten inches or a foot further south than it should've been. And of course, it upset him terribly, but that had happened in 1885, something like that. When it was first laid out, somebody made a mistake, and nobody had ever caught it.

But one morning, it was so funny! I would stay out late; I'd close the place up, and I was drinking. So like it'd be two or three or four, and then quite often I'd stop at the— what was bar back here I mentioned?

The Grand, yeah. So I stopped in the Grand six nights a week. And I was in the Grand and I would hang around and drink and talk and kid, and quite often I stayed out to daylight. But anyway, this day I'd stayed out, and for some reason—usually I just went home—but for some reason I was goin' back to the casino. I don't know why; and even though I drank all night, I could still walk and all, and I didn't wobble—I just looked tired and everything. And you can tell I'd

been drinking, but I had my senses pretty good.

But the sun was shining, and I walked around in front of the bank, and Hopper was comin' down (I don't know if he was unlocking it—it wasn't open yet, but it was close to opening time), and he spotted me. He said [gruffly], "Harrah Come here!"

And so I went, "Yes, Mr. Hopper." And he jumped all over me! And of course, I didn't know anything about his survey.

He said bla bla bla, and he said bla bla bla—"You're a foot over in my property!" He's like this [fierce shaking finger], you know—"You're a foot over in our property!" He said, "That's a terrible way to get property!—to build on somebody else's." He said, "That's as bad as stealing!"

And I'm—you know, he caught me flat-footed. I'm a bla bla bla bla. And I said, "Well, Mr. Hopper, it's Saturnos—," I said, "I have the deed on the property, and it goes back to 1885, and it's the same measurements." I said, "That happened in 1885. How can you blame me for it?"

And he said, "Just the same as stealin'!" [Laughs] Oh, he was mad!

And then later, of course, I'd told Eddie Questa the story. And of course, Eddie knew about it—he worked for the bank. And he laughed, and he said, "Well, that's Hop."

I said, "He was bawlin' me out for somethin' that—" I said, "I was born in 1911, and he's bawlin' me out for somethin' that happened in 1885!" [Laughing]

Wasn't it during that early period that you began to advertise and decide how to advertise gambling and when you invented the name "gaming?"

Yeah. Oh, we did that, that's true. We started advertising. We advertised a lot with

our Bingo. We just wrote the ads ourselves, and they were so simple then. It just was two-for-a-dime, eight-dollar games and da da da— and just took it to the paper and put it in—Bob Ring and I.

The when we were opening our casino, we realized that we were a little more bigger and more sophisticated. We couldn't do it ourselves, we wanted a better job done; so then I think we got Walt States to do it. He and Wallie Warren were in together. They'd started a company (I forget—States and Warren or whatever it was called). And it was a pretty good idea. Walt States was to handle the advertising, and Wallie Warren was to handle the political end. And you hired them as advertising, and you kinda got your political representation thrown in—it was a pretty good idea. And of course, Wallie's still goin'. But the only faulty thing about the thing was States really wasn't very good. He was a good guy, but he wasn't too good at advertising. But it was quite adequate. They handled our advertising at the first.

Wallie Warren went on his own as a lobbyist—and a super one. He's still in the same position today with us. He has other clients besides us, but he's still just Wallie Warren.

He's always had marvelous political connections. And I wondered if maybe those early days, when he had such good connections, you might want to describe what he did for you.

Oh, I don't remember anything especially he did. There was no really political wallop we needed.

He was close to Pat McCarran, for example.

Yeah, I understood all that, and I knew it at the time, but I didn't say, "Hey, Wallie

Warren, go tell Pat McCarran to defend—” ’cause there were bigger fish than me in the Around then I just tagged along; I was a little guy.

But Wallie always knew what was going on; and he had a knack, which lobbyists must have, of being on both sides of something and being friends with everybody, which—that’s impossible for me to be. I can be friendly with anybody; but I’m on one side of somethin’ and a fella goes against me on the other side, I just can’t put my arm around him and take him to lunch, which the lobbyists do very happily. Doesn’t bother [chuckling] ’em at all!

Lawyers are that way, too. (I’ll digress a minute.) It’s so disturbing to be in a lawsuit. Whether you’re winning or losing, you’re gonna have your lawyer say so-and-so. And then the opposing lawyer gets up and says that lawyer’s a liar, or whatever he can say without gettin’ thrown in jail. And they’ll scream and yell and shake their fists at each other, and when court’s adjourned for lunch, they’ll walk down the street arm in arm and have lunch, and— [laughs]. That always bugs me. But that’s the profession, I guess.

And the “gaming”—that just—you know, you have advertising meetings and things. And that evolved, but I think I probably thought of it. But it wasn’t a big thing; it was a little thing. It’s just “gaming” sounded better than “gambling,” and we weren’t tryin’ to revolution anything; it just sounded a little neater like many synonyms are a little neater than the other.

But we advertised, and we had a theme in our casino that was brought about—oh, yeah, that’s an interesting story. There was a bar in Los Angeles—it’s on the, hm—(I could take you to it) in Hollywood. And I’d heard about it. And it’s a six-toot room, yeah. That’s how buildings are, you know, and there’s just this six-foot room—was left over, and it’s quite

deep—maybe sixty feet deep, but it’s six feet wide. And a fella put a bar in it, a bar you can walk up to and buy a drink and still people can get by—this doesn’t seem possible.

So I’d heard about it, and so I said, “Gee, I gotta see that,” ’cause that’s always been a phobia of mine—they make bars too big behind where the bartender is, and they still do today, if you don’t watch ’em. They’ll make it just like that [four feet or so]. And here’s the bar, and here’s the back bar, and he should just have room enough to work and for another bartender to pass him. But they will invariably (’course, now I’ve screamed so much that we build ours pretty good, although I still watch it) —and for no reason the bartender will actually—he’s servin’, and you want a beer, and the beer’s here, he may have to take a step to get it—all this space—I don’t know why. And you look at bars in the future; you’ll see many of them—just a lot of room back there.

So when I heard about this bar in a six-foot room, I said, “That’s my kind of people.” I said, “They really know how to do it.” And I went and looked at it; I think the bar’s even still there today. And there’s a little bar, and the back bar is up higher, and they had used every inch, of course. But I’d say the bar front doesn’t set out over maybe eighteen inches at the most. And the bar top is just wide enough for a glass. And there’s room for one bartender (it’s only, you know, this long) and maybe eight stools, and in back there’s a few little booths, you know. But people can sit at the bar on a stool, and you can walk behind them. It’s just the cutest little thing you ever saw.

So they used every inch, and then the fixtures were very good, too. They were very high quality. So I said, “I want to meet that architect,” and I met him—I can’t remember his name. And he was a fella from the Beverly Hills area— Hollywood-Beverly Hills—and

a young, go-gettin' kind of a guy; and we hit it off real good. So he designed the place for us. And he did it, too. We had four bars to start, and they were real narrow and small. And then we realized that was ridiculous—we took 'em out. I think we had two bars for quite awhile.

Then he introduced me to a fixture maker in Beverly Hills—beautiful fixtures—teakwood and all. But then I forget—I think the architect evolved (as he was also a decorator or he handled the decorating) —and we wanted a theme. And he thought of the astrological signs. And he had them all over, and every one was, you know, etched in glass and all—very beautiful. And that was our—which wasn't a bad thing for a casino, come to think of it. It was really nice, and we had everything but carpet. I think we were afraid to put in carpet. I think we had terrazzo. And we were afraid of carpet because we just were afraid we wouldn't get the general public. And then later we tried carpet, and it worked real good. Or maybe we did have carpet—and we had terrazzo around the bars—that was it—and we had carpet. It was done real super, just from seem' that one little bar.

And that kinda revolutionized the casinos. Up till then they were just, you know—Bank Club was real nice, and it was just nothing exciting. It was clean and pretty glass and pretty bar, but just zero. And this really had some atmosphere; it was pretty good. Only thing, it was a little small, but we managed that.

You'd been talking about the advertising.

Walt States and Wallie Warren split up, and Walt had some help. But he really wasn't too qualified. So eventually we got rid of him and got, I think Meltzer was next—Dick

Meltzer—from San Francisco, who was super. He's our first real advertising agency we ever had, really that knew their stuff. He did a real good job for us. And then he'd come up with a lot of clever ideas and sign boards and all that sort of thing.

Then we've gone from agency to agency until we had a real good San Francisco agency—the last one we had and then the last—it's probably been five years we have our own, which is called an in-house agency, which is without any question the way to go. You hear a lot of arguments the other way, but then they're phony. If you have qualified people, you just eliminate one middle man, you know. Plus you have fast—you get things done quicker 'cause we just have an advertising meeting and go. And then another argument that you have—it convinced us for a little while—was the art work and that sort of thing. And of course, we have artists, but the real super stuff, that's professional, and they're kinda independent anyway. And we can just go to them and say, “Hey, we want somethin'” and buy it. That's just like the agency does.

Well, let me just ask you a little bit more about the problems in advertising as you've been associated with them, more than the advertising meetings. For so long there was this stigma against advertising anything with the word “casino”, and so you had to advertise the “show business,” or you had to advertise the “fun.” And you weren't allowed to advertise anything that even looked like it might be advertising gambling across state lines, even though everybody knew what it was. What kinds of discussions did you have to have with your advertising people to overcome those problems?

Oh, we didn't worry too much. I think we handled that properly; we went to our

lawyers. And ask, you know, a legal question, you should ask a lawyer. I think we asked them, and they interpreted the law. And at that time I think that whoever was enforcing it, the government agency that was, had just taken a little more on than they had the right to do, that any word that da da da da. And what the thing is—the law was—“advertising a lottery through the mails.” And okay, like a Keno game is a lottery, but is a Crap game a lottery? And you can define it two ways; you can define it as a lottery or not a lottery. And in my opinion, it’s not a lottery. And it meets the qualifications of a lottery in that you pay something to play, and the outcome is determined by luck, and you win a prize of value. That’s a lottery in one definition. But the definition that I prefer, a lottery is a lottery; it’s a Keno game. And a Bingo is almost a lottery, although not exact. But it’s where you buy a ticket for so much money, and then they pull some numbers out and the numbers are on your ticket. Chinese lottery, that’s a lottery in my definition. And I think that’s been recognized over the years now; that is a lottery. So you can advertise gaming; you can advertise “21” if you want to, I think, and Craps, although we don’t; the “gaming” just suffices. But I still would question, I would hesitate to advertise a true lottery. Like that’s why they called it “Keno,” ’cause they didn’t want to say “lottery.” “Racehorse Keno” they called it for a while. But as you said, so much more liberal now.

Do you want to talk about the beginnings of lounge entertainment in Harrah’s?

Yeah, okay. We did that—I don’t remember if we put it in before we expanded or not—entertainment, that is. See, we had our thirty-five feet, and when we got next door, we had seventy feet. The original was thirty-five,

and then we got thirty-five next door—or it’s thirty-six. The old one’s thirty-six, the new one thirty-five ’cause we stole a foot from the bank. [Laughs] That’s funny!

We had the thirty-six feet. We had it in the Blackout, then we got it in here. And I don’t think we put in entertainment till we got the expansion. And that year—I don’t remember what year that was.

We put in a little stage bar in the corner there, and it went quite well. It was very tiny ’cause we needed every inch we could have. We didn’t have any booths; we just had a bar and maybe fifteen, twenty stools. And it was done pretty nice, like so [drawing sketch]. Maybe we had a false partition here. The bar would be like this, and the stools. And then the performers would be up here. But you can see with this, they could come in—they came in from the basement, and they come up here and go in here; and they would come from behind. There’s nothin’ worse than comin’ through the crowd to get on stage. The space we had it was a pretty classy little—. And we had some—well, Wayne Newton worked here [laughs]. So we had some pretty good ones, and we liked it a lot. Well, we liked having Jackson ’cause we paid him, you know, a hundred and fifty dollars a week or two hundred or something; and the money was there—we sold that many more drinks. When we put this in with our little trios and things, why, the money was there—it just—people’d come in and bought drinks and maybe would play “21.” Plus the joint was so much more exciting, and that’s true today. You walk in a place, and all you hear is the click of the slot machines. That’s where Fitz [Lincoln Fitzgerald, owner] missed the boat, and he’s still missin’ the boat—although I guess he has some over there in his new place. Just the fact there’s some music—“Ooh, wow! We’re somewhere,” you know. Where if it’s just—and

maybe the man wants to play, maybe the lady couldn't care less; but there's a little music, she may want to hang around, so it's a good business.

That's the point of the entertainment, anyway.

Yeah, oh yeah, yeah, of course, 'course. To bring people in and once they're in, to keep 'em there. And of course, that's how we work it, you know. But like our "cabaret," we call 'em today—the show will start maybe—or generally; you can't always time when the Headliner Room will "break," as we say, or empty—the show's over. And say it's over at nine-thirty, and you can time it pretty well; but some stars vary their times quite a bit. But say the show's over; ideally, if it's over at nine-thirty, then the other show would have started about nine-twenty-five. So people start—see, they come out, and okay, they've seen the show; we brought 'em in; now they may be wantin' to go home. We don't want 'em to go home; we want 'em to stay around. So walkin' out and here da da da da— "Oh, wait! Let's don't go yet!" But if the lounge or the cabaret is dead at the time the other one's dead, why, "Hm, let's leave." You want somethin' goin' all the time. And it works.

You talked about getting to meet all of the people in the Blackout Bar—the leaders in Reno and so forth—after it became the place to go. How about talking now about some of the new customers as the place began to expand, the players and ones that you became particularly friendly with.

I was never too friendly with many of the players. I'm not today—I mean I know them—I know some of them—a lot of them I don't know, and it's kinda neat that way—to not get too close. But then, oh, the man

who loses fifty thousand—I'm not the best in the world to handle him, and we have professionals that can handle him (and also I'm the guy supposedly that got the fifty). I'm in a different position than an employee. An employee can sympathize. He can say, "Gee whiz. I know how you feel. I blew twelve thousand last week at Harvey's. I—" da da da. Where I can't say that, so it's really good to get not—still am friendly—"How do you do," da da da da da. And then, I don't get too close. And it works real good.

I had a thought there that was pretty good. [Pause] Well, I guess I kinda said it, that our good players like Rome Andreotti or [Merton] Mert Smith who know them ten times better than I do. And it's a good arrangement. In fact, like the golf tournaments, which I don't go to because I'm not a golfer—but the tact that I'm not around too much I guess gives me an air of mystery, or something. So when I do see them, why, they're quite impressed that Bill Harrah said hello (which sounds kind of snooty but it works real good). One of 'em, Art Berbarian, a fella from around Fresno, very wealthy man, an early family down there, and they own just field after field—wonderful, productive land. And he's a zillionaire. And I think he had four brothers, and they own thousands of acres. And his brothers have died over the years, by accident, and this and that, and he's the only one left. And of course, they were married and wives and things, but still, a lot of it's still in the family; and he has all this—. And he's 'bout our best customer. And he and I are "Art" [and] "Bill" sort of a thing. But still I think I'm not too close to him. I will be at the Lake, and he may be sitting in the next booth or something, and I'll go over and "How ya doin', Art?" and all. ('course, I always find out how he's done beforehand.) But he's about our best player. So I know him, but not like—see, I'd

never had dinner with him. I've had a drink with him. We sell him Rolls Royces, or give him Rolls Royces. He has a son that I think we sold a Ferrari real cheap.

But it's an awkward position, very awkward. In the old days when I was on the floor, I didn't, 'cause I didn't know enough about the games, but occasionally I would be the floor boss. That meant Wayne had to leave for an hour or so and I would take over. And I couldn't tell if the Craps were phony, but I could handle everything else. But the awkward thing, which I learned real fast, that where Wayne could say no, I couldn't say no. I mean I could say no, but it wouldn't be accepted 'cause I was the guy, and it was my money, and so I was a cheapskate for sayin' no. But anyone else—Bob Ring or Wayne—they could pass the buck. And they'd say, "Oh gee, I'd love to give it to you, but if I do, Bill'll raise hell"—which is—you know—doesn't bother me any, if you gotta say that. But it's tough being the—you know.

When did Warren Nelson start working for you?

Oh, he started at the opening. Wayne Martin got him. Wayne knew him and brought him in to run the Keno. Yeah. That was Warren—see, he came out of Montana where there was a lot of Keno up there—Butte.

Warren and I are friends today. I know him, you know, Gaming Commission things and all that—"Warren," "Bill," you know. I've known his wife; in fact, I knew them before they got married, and I knew her before they got married.

He ran the Keno for us, but he brought everyone from Montana to work in the Keno—which at the time made sense—'cause that's where they'd had Keno for years, and there were a lot of trainees; so it was easy.

Montana kids were good, and a lot of 'em we have came from Montana.

But it got to be a sore point that if a fella wasn't from Montana, he didn't amount to much in Warren's eyes. Warren was an independent thinker which is okay. But when he's workin' for you—and occasionally he would do somethin' against the rules, which didn't hurt the place any, but he ran it like it was his own place. And he would do that—I'd come back; I'd say, "Why the hell did you do that? That isn't what I want."

And he'd say, "Well that's the way it should be."

And I'd say, "Warren, you're mixed up here!" I said, "I'm—you know—" which I wouldn't say it exactly that way. But what I meant to say, or I meant was, "It's my place; I want it run this way. And if you have your own place, you wanna run it that way—" which I guess he finally did! [Laughs] And he would fight you, you know. This was the way it should be, by golly; and he was sure of that.

[Warren Nelson] was right below Wayne, as I guess he was the manager. But it seemed the Montana boys were in all the key jobs. A promotion came along, a Montana boy got it, which was okay for a while, but then when we got well established and became a pretty good place, why, then as anyone can see, they made a morale problem. And Warren had always been ambitious, which is—nothin' wrong with that—that's to be admired.

So as time went on, there was a little more strain, possibly, between us; he really favored his buddies from Montana, and they could do no wrong. And so finally one time, I think the break-off was between Warren and I, and it was just something that he did for one of his fellas to kinda cover up for him, which wasn't a terrible thing, but it just wasn't right. We had a few words, and he was ready to move on; so we parted friends—you know, we've been

friends, and we were friends the next day. In fact, we didn't even raise our voices; it was just we both agreed that it was time to leave. And he was a super guy in the casino.

I had a lot of faith in Wayne, but I had as much or more in Warren. Warren was in that pit, I didn't care—Eddie Sahati, anybody, could be playin'; it didn't bother me a bit 'cause Warren knew everything that needed to be known. And he kept up; there's new things—although even today there's new angles, and we have to really watch it. But Warren—some people would just stay; I'm sure you've seen those kind of people, like they couldn't learn anything new, and Warren was always looking for something.

Did you have any others like that in those early days?

Oh, yeah, we had a whole bunch of 'em and there was one fellow—was a super guy. Billy Panelli. He was our Faro Bank guy.

He was an old family guy. And he was Italian, but his face looked—his eyes had a little slant; he looked almost Oriental. And he was "Joe Deadpan;" he never smiled. Oh, once if Panelli smiled, why, everyone—"Hey, look at Panelli! Somethin' really must've happened!" He'd smile once a year, you know. And he kinda liked being that way. He liked to sit at the Faro Bank, you know, and just—. And he knew an awful lot. And he worked at the Bank Club on the Faro Bank, and he was super. I used to watch the game a lot, and he was—I liked him.

And then Warren Nelson liked Faro; so we put in Faro, and I think we had Panelli running it. And there he was one of the top dealers—I guess Warren ran it and Panelli worked there. But Panelli knew Faro backwards and forwards. Then when Warren left, Panelli ran it, and he ran it for years for

us. And it never made much money; there's a lot of problems with Faro Bank.

Then later when we finally got rid of Faro Bank (much against Panelli's wishes), he worked for us as a boss, as a pit boss. And he was super. So he finally—I think he got sick somehow. We sure didn't fire him, but I think he just got kinda old and sick. He used to come around. His son is still around—Billy Panelli, Junior. I don't know him by sight, but once or twice a year somebody'll come up and say, "I'm Billy Panelli, Jr." He's a go go go—he's doin' somethin' here in town very successfully. He may work in the casino, or he may be in real estate or somethin'.

Billy Panelli was a super—he was a character. If you were casting a movie, why, you'd want a Warren Nelson and you'd want a Billy Panelli and all.

That Faro Bank was quite a bit of fun. See, the percentage on it is so low, you know, that there aren't any in northern Nevada any more. There's one or two in southern Nevada. You go down and then they won't be there, and then the next time you go, they are there. 'course that's one game where there's certain bets—there's no percentage at all, against case card in a Faro Bank—why, that's an absolutely even bet. So that then you have quite a bit of expense running the game, so you have to have a lot of big bets to carry it. It just doesn't—.

Rome Andreotti likes Faro Bank just for the romance of the game, and I like it and all. We got where we could handle it, where we could make a couple of dollars with it. And it's quite an attraction; there's a Faro Bank game. But one thing you can't argue against—like a Faro Bank'll take a hundred square feet or something, at least, maybe more. And in the hundred square feet you could put in maybe twenty slot machines, and the twenty slot machines'll make ten times

what the Faro Bank will make, or even more. So it's just almost indefensible, except for the atmosphere. There's some atmosphere there, but it's hard—the bottom line, the end of the year and all where the Faro Bank made twelve thousand dollars, and the twenty slot machines made a hundred and forty thousand, why, you just can't even think about it any more.

We can try it later. I am kinda glad you reminded me. We might think about that. I'll talk to Rome—puttin' one in—like at Tahoe, we have a lot of room now, and we can maybe put one up on the second level or somethin' and advertise it. That might be a good idea—give it a try. I don't know if there's any players around any more, though. But it's the simplest game in the world to play.

All the cards are laid out on the table in there. Denomination doesn't matter—the spades, hearts, you know—just it's an ace or a king, so there's thirteen cards— [motioning a stack of cards] ace, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. And there's two cards in the box, and like when an ace comes up, like you—the card up here (that's a dead card 'cause it's played) and the card here—this is the losing card. And the next card's the winning card, so you—like you would take this card—or that's a dead card—you take this—the game's being played now. So this card is a king, so it goes down here; and there's an ace left. The king's the loser; the ace is the winner. It's so simple—every card either wins or loses. You can bet the card either way. You bet the ace to win, or you bet the ace to lose, So if I bet the ace to win and the ace wins, I win. I bet the ace to win, the ace loses, I lose. It I bet the king to lose and it loses, I win. So it's so simple—it's just really good. And it's so easy to play.

When I said about the even bet—like they'd come out ace-ace, so it wins and loses, why, you lose half your bet; if you bet the ace, you lose half

your bet. Or they'll put it on and make you win it again, so you have to win it twice—which is the same as losin' half.

But when you get the case ace or the case king, that means the last one. And they keep track of 'em. Like every time there's four aces, of course, or every time an ace plays, they have a little guy keep score and he marks the ace. So when there's three buttons gone, there's only one button left, that means there's one ace in the deck left; so the ace either has to win or has to lose—no other way. So that makes an absolutely even bet. So that's when they'll bet maybe a couple of chips. And then till the last card or the last few cards, and then towards an even bet, then they would bet quite a bit. But as it is an even bet, why, the house had no percentage, so it was a tough game. But it was a game you could win quite a bit at, too. And it's so colorful—you know—you see all the old Virginia City—over at the Faro Bank game, you know.

I had a funny experience, too; and that was—oh, that's how I got to meet Billy Panelli. That's a real interesting story.

When we closed our Bingo game when we first came up here— just the first year or two—we'd go hang around the Bank Club and the Palace Club. And we'd go back and forth; we liked the Bank, and we liked the Palace, and I finally got where I liked the Palace a little more.

So I was in the Palace Club One morning watchin' the Faro Bank game, and one of the bets I liked was the ace to win. So there was a case ace. So I reached over and I put a dollar (yeah, a dollar) on the ace to win. And you could have chips, or you could bet money; and I put a silver dollar on the ace to win. So the ace won. So I thought, "Hm, dollar!" So I reached over for my dollar, and a fella here reached over and grabbed my dollar.

And I thought, "Oh nuts! I'm gonna have an argument!"

So then a fella over here said to this fella, "You stole my dollar, you son of a bitch!"

And the other guy said, "The hell I did—that's my bet!"

The guy said, "No, that's my bet."

So this fella hit this fella, and they knocked each other down; and the bouncers had to come—separate 'em—and I'm standin' there like this [hands spread]. I went—you know. And Panelli's up in the—they had a chair—lookout chair, they called it—and Panelli's sittin' in the chair—and I told you he was a sourpuss, but he's laughin'! And I looked at him, and he's laughin' and he's lookin' at me. Then he said, "It's your bet, you know. I saw it." He says, "It's your bet."

And so he paid me, you know, and he gave me the dollar. And I said, "Gee, thank you, Mr. (whatever)."

And he laughed. He said, "I've watched Faro a long time." He said, "That's the first time," he said, "I've seen two guys get in an argument, and not one—neither one of 'em had the—." They were both kinda drunk and—[laughing].

But I felt so left out, you know. So first I thought, "I'm gonna have an argument." And then in a second I thought, "Well, how you gonna—how do I explain—hey, that's really my dollar," you know, when here's two guys [laughing]—! But Panelli saw it. But gee, that was part of the expense of runnin' a Faro Bank—was that you had a lookout all the time because you could phony-baloney pretty good in it, 'cause there was a lot of money changing hands.

But then finally we became friends, and then when we opened, why, he was happy 'cause he didn't really like the way they were runnin' or somethin'. 'course, he'd never really

liked the way anybody was runnin', and he didn't like the way we ran it, exactly. But he was a good old guy—Billy Panelli. (See, I hadn't thought of him in years. This is kinda fun thinkin' of people like that.)

REGULATION, TAXES, AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

You'd been talking about the opening on Virginia Street. Do you want to talk about the changes in regulatory practices that came in just about the same time? Up until 1945, whatever regulation was done on gaming was at the local level, and then in 1945 the Legislature gave that licensing to the tax Commission. Did you like state regulation, dislike it, not pay any attention to it?

Well, we resented it a little like any new regulation. Like today, anyone, there's somethin' new all the time. But in those days we looked at it, and we were in favor of—or at least I was in favor of it, 'cause I'd traveled around the state so much, and I knew that there had been and were crooked places in Reno, and there were crooked places all over the state. And I thought this regulatory body would hopefully turn things around. But I was very—I was opposed to them always—and the reason, not only because I'm an honest person, but I enjoyed my business or career, and I wanted it to go forever. I knew that if it was not handled properly that it could be possibly voted out in those days. I think they even had polls in those days that showed that by far the majority of the state wanted gambling. But still it was an uneasy feeling when someone would get cheated out of their chunk of money and would go home to Chicago or New York, or wherever, or San Francisco, and really knock the state. And

there were more than one of those, and it was very uncomfortable. So the state control was a real good thing, of course.

Then when the taxes came along, that was fine, up to a point. And of course, we'll say that taxes are plenty high, which of course, someone not in the casino business would say, "Oh ho ho, he's just sayin' that." But anyone resents taxes. But when it is on the gross, it's a terrible tax 'cause you can be losing money; and we've lost money—a lot of money—day after day—and still have to pay a terrible tax on it.

Unfortunately, there was the last raise, I think from six and a half to somethin' else. And the state didn't really need the money at the time; I think it was a political gesture. And maybe there had been one year where it was down a little bit; the state absolutely didn't owe anything, and was in fine shape. And I argued much against it, and some of my fellas said, "Well, it's only a halt of a percent—so what?"

And I said, "Well, that's millions of dollars a year, and the state doesn't need it."

And "No, they don't need it."

And I said, "Well, just another year and the state'll have so much money they won't know what to do with it."

Well, anyway, it went in. So then I think I asked Shep or whoever was close to it, "Okay, it's six and a half—" and the state had just money runnin' out of the (or seven—I don't know what it is) runnin' out of their treasury—and I said, "How about lowerin' it?"

And "Lower it? Whoever heard of such a thing?" And right today they—I don't know—ninety million dollars, or whatever. Everything's paid for, and still there's not a word about new casinos coming on stream every day now. And there's gonna be an awful lot of money, and still it's—which disappoints me a lot. And it's not really money out of my pocket 'cause I—I mean it's money out of the

company, but really it's not make or break, we're doin' wonderful. But it disappoints me that the state, which is so straight—and that to me is something that California would pull or New York or somewhere, 'cause it's not fair. They don't need the money, and they should—sure, when they need the money, it can go up; and when they don't need the money, or as much money, should go down. It's disappointing.

You were just beginning to become a big operation when that first licensing and regulation started to come. Did you have contacts with the state license agents? What kind of contacts did you have?

Oh, it wasn't unpleasant; it was just another government body. But we could see the need for it; and of course, we were clean. We may have had some problems, but they couldn't've been very big, 'cause I don't recall any; it was just—. Of course, by then I was a little away from the floor, but it was no big change at all, at least in our operation, or in my life; it was fine. Of course, it gave gambling a better name, nationally and publicity-wise, and so on. The time had come; it was about right, I'd say.

The table tax distribution came in '57, when they decided they were going to get that out into the state. Did you have anything to do with that?

Oh, yeah, we were aware of it. And I think we supported that because it gave each county something, and we felt that of course Washoe County and Douglas County would be for gambling forever; but some of the little counties that weren't getting much would say, "Well, so what?" "What difference does it make?" or "We're in cattle," and so on. And

we thought—and honestly, I still think—that those old-timers there would have voted for gambling. But, why not give 'em—and it's quite a bit of money to some of those little counties, and it didn't hurt anybody, and it was a very smart move, we thought. Made a big difference in some of those counties.

Did you personally get involved with that?

Oh, no, I was never personally involved in anything like that; but I was, you know—talked to them.

What instructions did you give to your lobbyists?

Well, just mainly—"Yes, we're for that. Of course." And I don't know who we talked to or anything like that. Yeah, we liked that very much. Gave everybody a piece of the pie, yeah.

Your people were quite active in another of the big changes, and that was on the slot tax rebate.

Well, we worked at it. It just makes so much sense for us—you know. Well, it just doesn't need discussing 'cause all that money goin' to the federal when the state can have it, why, why not? It was just a dumb tax to start with. It was an old antigambling tax that we inherited, and it wasn't fair in this state; it was fair in others—well, it wasn't fair in other states. The same old story, when they couldn't do it direct, then they went through the back door, did it by taxation. But the way gambling's spreading now, I think those dangers are gone for the foreseeable future, about gambling being outlawed. Our whole thing is being taxed out of existence. It's not only the gambling business, but the automobile business and the hamburger business, whatever.

As a major taxpayer, how does the Nevada budget surplus affect your thinking about taxes in this state?

Well, I believe in it a little but—. Yeah, I think a state should be run like, well, maybe a household, that you should have your bills paid and an income—adequate. But I don't believe—well, a household's a bum example. There's something I'm trying to compare it with. But I know I don't believe in a zillion-dollar surplus that—. So gambling is voted out and all that's cut out, which is a million-to-one shot. And so then the state has to run for twenty years, and the schools and the colleges and so on and universities isn't cut a dime, while we live the way we have, you know—that's dumb. And if gambling went out, why, that's a new ball game; we gotta take a whole new look at things. Well, to answer, no—I don't believe in a—no, of course not.

Taxes shouldn't be, you know—. You know, the purpose of tax—I will spell 'em out, but I don't think I do too good a job with it; the purpose of taxes is, well, the government is the organization of the citizens, and that's for safety, primarily, and—well, I'd almost say safety, 'cause protection against being invaded and protection against fires and that sort of thing, just protection. And that should be it! And of course, federal and many states now go on and on—welfare [gesture-spiral] cradle-to-grave security—then that isn't what it was all about at all. It should be the least government is the best government.

[It's] so funny—we see so much of that in our little Stanley and all up there. Well, like Stanley is incorporated, and we want it so [laughing], selfishly, because you can't have a bar license in Idaho unless in an incorporated city. But like our Middle Fork Lodge is in the county; there's no city there, of course. So we just have fewer officials; even little Stanley

has—you've got the county officials, then you've got the city officials, and the—. And, of course, in Middle Fork we only have the county, and there's only three or four of them, so [chuckling] it's pretty nice! And, of course, you know 'em all; life is different; you know 'em on a first name basis. They apologize when they appraise your property [chuckles].

But you get in the bigger cities—'course, there aren't too many in Idaho, but bigger it gets, the worse it gets. The trouble with the world and the country is people. Just cut the people out of it, and everything'd be fine. Animals are fine; it's the darn people.

Do you know anything about the IRS audits of your employees on the toke problem?

Hm. I don't know more than what you know. They were after 'em, of course, and that's—I don't know the answer to that, really. It would be nice if they were tax-free, but I don't think the law is that way, and some people are gonna pay it and some aren't. That's the Internal Revenue's problem, and to arbitrarily assess, I think that's wrong. I don't know the answer to it, but that's a worldwide problem; it isn't only Nevada. And primarily those waiter and waitress, and, where they get tips, is how do they handle it.

And this thing in California [Jarvis-Gann] is crazy, but it's a good thing. Like Jerry Brown. I don't know if you've followed his career. He was really a smarty, you know, and probably rightfully so. If my father'd been governor of California and I was raised in the mansion and then I got a runnin' jump and got to be governor in my thirties, I'd probably be a little cocky, too. But he was so cocky, and then to hear him today—"What are you gonna do, Governor?"

"Well, we're going to live with it; we're going to—" this, that, and the other, and, "cut

back," and so-and-so and so-and-so. And it was usin' a sledgehammer to kill a fly, but I think it's a good thing for the country, really, to get the politicians to realize that it's not a bottomless thing.

Statewide and nationally, if we could ever get that—that's my biggest worry is the unbalanced budget, and goin' up sixty to a hundred billion a year, and no one seems to care. And I've asked everyone I know, whose opinion I value, and I can't get an answer. "What's gonna happen?" And they just kinda avoid it. Someday—I mean the way I was brought up, two and two is four—she's gonna blow. And when she blows, it's gonna be the biggest mess ever, nothin'll be worth anything, or money won't (that's for sure). Maybe gold will be worth something, real estate, of course, but our financial and our insurance companies and our banks—woo! Nobody seems to care; that really worries me. I mean, I can still put it out of my head; I'll sleep fine tonight. But I think about that and, oh, not daily, but whenever I'm talkin' like I am now. And I make speeches for it, for what they're worth. That unbalanced budget is absolutely crazy. And now they're talkin' like Carter was—and you know, it's easy to sit on the outside, and there are so many built-in expenses that they can't control; but he was big hero at the end of four years, hoping to balance the budget. It should be balanced every year; plus we should be payin' back! I'd like to see it balanced and paid back fifty to a hundred a year for twenty or thirty years, and really, you know—"Hey, the budget deficit is sixty-eight billion"—wouldn't that be wonderful? And it's fifty billion and it's forty-two billion, instead of seven hun—no, we have to raise it to five, six, seven—. And pretty soon there'll be a trillion [whistles]! And nobody cares—well, I'm sure other people—I'm sure I'm not the only one. I'm sure there's a lot of uneasy people.

So much, it seems, of the whole gaining scene in Nevada has depended a lot—at least in northern Nevada—on how you felt about it, or what you supported, or what you designed. The laws, even, have depended on the testimony from your organization.

Well, that's true, and it's very flattering, too. Also I think it—. Well, I think it's quite proper to—I agree with it [laughing].

Well, it is true, and our organization did it. A lot of that I wasn't in at all, but I guess I started it with the way the departments that I'm interested in—why, do it right; do it the way it should be done. And then set policies for the next guy, and he quits or gets killed; and so you don't start all over again, that what you've got to this point, that you've kept. These policies are so wonderful. And spell 'em out. And there's the book, and read the book! And we put a fella in a new job, and here you give him—it's really not too tough being a supervisor, and executive at Harrah's, you know, if you have common sense. And you get in your job, and here's the book. It just tells you—and there's hardly anything that'll come up that isn't in the book somewhere, if you really read the book. And then there's somethin'—no answer, then there's someone you can ask. So we tell 'em, "Read the damn book!" And of course, a lot of work goes into those.

But those books are not published or anything—.

Oh, no.

Those are just quietly company documents, aren't they?

Yeah, yeah. Well, it's no secret that we have it. They were doin' a story here recently—or it didn't jell; it was a life story, and so-and-so.

And then the reporter was intrigued with a number of procedures we have. I think there were either forty or seventy, and he wanted a picture of me with all the procedures and books, where I could hardly see over it. And you know, I've had enough of that; I thought, I'll speak up, and I said, "Well, that's dumb! That isn't what I do. You want a picture of me, and," you know, "take a picture in the showroom or at my desk or at the car collection or—I occasionally walk through the casino. But," I said, "those procedures—I've never seen them. I know they're there."

No, no that's what he wanted. And so they had me over takin' a picture for a day and a half, you know. I'm lookin' over 'em like this, and I'm lookin' like this, you know. And you do it—you don't argue—you just do it. And they killed the story, and Mark Curtis was very disappointed, and I said, "Well, I don't blame them. That's a dumb story!" Well, they finally ran a little squib, and they didn't use the picture, fortunately. But that's the only time I ever saw the procedures, but they do exist.

But they were undoubtedly written at your direction.

Well, I mean yeah, they evolved.

Another of the things that happened during this period that has fascinated me, and its widespread effect, was the disappearance of the silver dollar. Remember Eva Adams made a speech to the Mining Congress.

Yeah, where they disappeared overnight, yeah.

Would you describe that?

Well, Eva, yeah. Yeah, I know her, and she's okay. But I always kinda thought she was overrated, but maybe I'm wrong. When

she made that statement—and it did—people just grabbed 'em. And then we immediately went to work, and we'd already been working on some— 'cause it was getting tight—some tokens. But it sure touched it off—just—I don't remember exact details, but someone would; but I know it was really quite a thing.

What did you do? Were there conferences about, "Well, we'll have to get some tokens, or what a dumb thing that was that she did."

Oh, yeah, of course, it was dumb. No, I think we were ahead of that; I think we'd already planned our tokens. And that's quite an elaborate thing, like our chips and our games. And they have to be designed properly and manufactured, and then you try 'em out and—. Just making chips for the game is a tremendous thing, to do it right. And so, of course, these fit into that, so we had been planning on it. Then we had decided on the size and all, and it was a size that wouldn't go into a dollar machine. Well, it was very studied, yeah.

Did you get involved in that?

No, we had meetings on it, I remember, and you know, they'd bring it up to us. "Well, here's where we are, and here's the sizes, and here's the colors," and here's so-and-so. Yeah, we talked to [the Franklin Mint people]—had meetings with them. Yeah, we spent a lot of time with them—on what at the time we felt was quite a major problem, but [it] turned out it wasn't. It worked out okay.

And of course, they came along with the phony silver. By then, people were educated to dollars, and I don't think the phonies come back. I know I don't use 'em. And I did before. I always carried two silver dollars in my pocket for one reason. Well, I've always

done it, so that's maybe a good-luck thing with me, but sometimes you want to give a tip real fast for a doorman, in your car, or the ladies' room or something, and that you can reach like that [claps]. But prior to the [shortage], I never had a paper dollar in my pocket, ever. It was always silver. And now I carry paper dollars.

Well, I have a silver dollar story you might like. I've been a race car enthusiast for years, and I'd never been to Indianapolis. And I always wanted to go, so in 1947 or '8 I went. I decided I was goin' to Indianapolis. So we went back there—another couple and my girlfriend and I. We got to Indianapolis, and we stayed at an old hotel there, and we maneuvered around, and we got some tickets (which wasn't really too hard), and we got acquainted. We were there a few days before the race, and it was very exciting to—you know, your first time in Indianapolis, wow!

We took about maybe a pocket full of silver dollars with us—twenty or thirty or something, and we got there, and we discovered they were a big hit. No matter where you went, if you spent the silver dollars or tipped with 'em, it was a big thing. They had all colored help in the hotel, and they would just come around, and, you know, "Can we get some of those dollars?" And they'd do anything for them. So we saw what a hit they were, that we called Reno and had 'em send us airmail special a couple of hundred more silver dollars just 'cause we'd go in a restaurant and give 'em—and you know, the waitress is just delighted that she got—that was fun! So we had 'em.

So anyway, the day before the race I went down to the barber shop to get a haircut in the hotel. And I'm sitting there—of course, I'm a real race car and driver enthusiast. And I'd read—pictures—I read all about 'em, and I knew, you know—I know!—I'm like a little

kid, and—. I went in and I had my hair cut, and I paid for it in silver dollars. "Oh-ho! Look at the silver dollars!" And I tipped them and paid my check in silver dollars. And as I walked out, Maury Rose walked in, who was a race driver. And so I looked—"Oh! Gee, there's Maury Rose!" You know, I'm not the kind that would go up or, you know—I just looked and admired. And he was a slender, very dapper little man, and I admired—he was a good driver, I knew.

So anyway, the race came along, and this guy's in front and that guys s in front; and there's two cars that are owned by the same owner, and they're One and Two. So finally at the last minute Maury Rose won the race. Now, pictures and Gasoline Alley, and on and on, and the newspapers like this and that. And the next day I'm reading the newspaper, and "Mr. Rose, when did you think—" he'd been in the race many times and never gotten tenth, I don't believe—bad luck, you know. They said, "Well, when did you first have an inkling that this might be your year?"

And he said, "Well, it was just another year. We had good cars, but we've always had good cars," this and that, and said, "You know?" He said, "The day before yesterday," he said, "I needed a haircut," and he said, "I went in the barber shop, and when I came out, I paid for my haircut, and the man gave me a silver dollar in change." And he said, "I thought that that silver dollar might be lucky—." So he said, "I carried it with me in the race."

And I thought, "That's my [beats chest]—!" [Laughs] And I was so proud of that! I never got to meet him. Yeah, he's still alive. Someday I'm gonna—. I've told that story before; he's probably heard it by now. You know, nobody else was puttin' out silver dollars, so it must have been mine that he got; so of course, that's how he won the race.

The Black Book came in about 1961 as part of the state regulations. Did you have any reaction to that?

Oh, yeah, we were just as strong as we could be all along for keepin' the bad guys out. And there were many instances where bad guys kinda got licenses. And that's why it was so good when it went state, because citywide there was really no control in your little city council, wherever they might be. Who was a friend of who? That was a bad, bad scene. I mean it could've been much worse. I think we were very lucky to get by the way we did. When it went statewide and then their regulations and then the Black Book and—put their name in the book. And they come in, throw 'em out; tell 'em to get the hell out of the state. I mean we got somethin' goin' for us here that's just wonderful, and why let some phonies mess it up? I couldn't be stronger on that.

I think the Black Book was—well, of course, that might've been the newspapers or something, was maybe not handled properly, but I believe in a list of known bad people you don't want around the gaming industry—nothin' wrong with that at all. Sure, you could have that in the aircraft industry or the automobile industry or whatever. Or stock market—they have a lot of stuff goin', or your phony-baloney—why, you sure as hell can't be a dealer in the stock market. So we're for that a hundred percent.

Your feelings about the state regulators seem to be so positive. How do you feel about the Feds when they come in to do an investigation?

Oh, generally, they're bad news. Where it's proper—and there are, you know, the FBI or whatever, and they're lookin' for a Dillinger or something, why, more power to them. But

where they try to get in gaming through the back door or something, why, that's bad news. Of course, we fight that. National regulation could be disaster or just—well, maybe not disaster, but as it is today in any business that has to deal with the federal government, so many times there's so many forms and so many rules, and so many of which are unnecessary. Like OSHA is a good example of meddling. It just so complicates things and makes life more difficult for no reason, or for very little reason, and usually the results don't justify the means—or many times they don't justify the means. And it just gives a job to some little bureaucrats who love to throw their weight around. That OSHA, I'm sure you're familiar with that. That's a good example of where the federal government intrusion is just costly and time consuming and doesn't really accomplish ten percent of anything—just bad news.

OSHA is a fairly recent kind of thing. I was wondering about the FBI and the IRS in this earlier period before about 1971. I just wondered if any of your operations had been the subject of some kind of investigation or surveillance from one of these agencies that you might like to describe.

Internal Revenue depends entirely or generally on the individual. And some are real straight; there's a lot of high-quality people in the Internal Revenue that I've met that just go by the book and go along. And then there's some that resent you because you're successful and have more money than they have and just look for somethin' to find wrong. And we keep our books as straight as anybody in the world. And they come in and they can't find somethin'; they're disappointed in some cases. But I wouldn't—no blanket either way; there're some good ones and some bad ones.

Lookin' at it from the Internal Revenue's part, I think they do an excellent job considerin' what they're doing, which isn't popular, and then the type of people that have to do their work, which have to be oh, financial, bookkeeping type of people, and many times they can make more in private business. So to get the quality they need in Internal Revenue is just really a thankless task, I think.

In fact, I think it's a bum way of raising taxes. I think if they cut out all the exemptions and all that and just had a less figure—and of course, it would be a happy day when they get the budget balanced and get an intelligent budget for the country to live in, and quit tryin' to do good for the whole world and all the people that don't want to work. But then have just a general, overall tax, and leave out the deductions and that's it, and so much percent of everything, which is very difficult because so-and-so has to have an exemption, and so-and-so and so-and-so and so-and-so and—. And then it goes on and on; it's so complicated. If it just could be a straight six percent or something of your income, and that's it. And it would be so easy to enforce, and normal. But I think it's the way the country—anything simple, they don't want, you know. Or many people don't, your bureaucrats don't want it simple; they want millions of people workin' for the government and makin' the life of the other people uncomfortable. It's just a fact of life these days. I wish I knew the answer to it, but—.

Have you ever observed any of the so-called skimming investigations, or known about some kind of skimming going on?]

Oh, yeah, I knew that in Vegas in the old days and in Reno a little and Tahoe a little, that there were some operators that did skim (or whatever the word is) because it was common practice in the old days in

Vegas to—some stars would get so much in a check, and so much under the table. They had a big investigation about that a couple of years ago down there. And I was pleased that some of the stars I knew didn't get in trouble, or if they did, you know, they didn't have to go to jail. And then we had some stars that asked us—which we never did. And I'm sure glad we never did; you know, that isn't it. The money is ten thousand, there's a ten thousand. We got a few, you know; but I don't think we ever lost anybody because of it, but maybe they grumbled a little bit. I think those days are gone now; I don't think that's done any more, at least not to my knowledge. But that was mostly Vegas, but a little up here.

Can you think of any that you observed, particularly?

Oh, yeah, I never saw it, but I knew of stars that would work for—well, Mert Wertheimer was one. He'd bawl me out (I thought I mentioned that to you).

I was thinking about the, take it off the top before you count it for tax purposes kind of skimming.

Oh, well, that's where he got the money that he paid the star. He took it off the top before he counted it.

And you know, those type of people always have the separate bankroll that's not counted, for politicians, for whatever, and just, you know, in the hip pocket sort of thing. Well, that's what that is. Yeah, Mert liked to do that. And others—and I know a few—I'd rather not mention them now 'cause most of 'em are reformed—or all of 'em that I know now. I mean we never hear of it any more.

The state people keep them pretty straight anyway, don't they?

Yeah, but it still could be done, but I don't think it is. I think they just pay it, which they weren't really savin' any money anyway, really. And the stars will work without it. I think maybe they thought they wouldn't work otherwise, or something. Of course, they will.

I think it's interesting to know that Harrah's has been kind of a model that various agencies have built their enforcement standards on.

So statewide, well, we've just always had or always tried to have an excellent accounting system and streamline—zingety, zingety, zing. And it's been written many times, and I still insist on it. Well, I don't have to insist on it any more; it just—put on my desk at eleven o'clock every morning. Of course, all top people in management, on their desk at eleven o'clock, we have everything about yesterday, just the money, the so and so, the number of people in the Cabaret and the show, and every little detail on the lady tripped on the way out of the Cabaret and so and so; it's all in a report and it's on our desk. Plus how much money we took in and the winners—big winners, big losers, so on and so-and-so. We're right on top all the time. And our accounting, which I know nothing about and don't want to know about [laughing], is—it's really excellent. The way it got excellent is—I don't know really who's responsible for that except we in top management want it right and want it simple. You know, we don't want to have the most beautiful set of books in the world just because we have the most; we want it realistic. In other words, the purpose of books is—legally, of course, you have to keep records and pay taxes, and otherwise, further the information you want. And of

course, when computers came along, of course, that made a new ball game out of it. And I don't understand computers either, and I don't really want to, except as a tool, they're just wonderful, and the information—. Well, we had one problem with computers; our biggest problem, they were getting a lot of information that we didn't want and couldn't use. 'course, the programmers, they always want to put somethin' new in, and we were getting information that was just absolutely useless, just statistics runnin' out of your ears that had nothin' to do with, you know, how many people were gonna see the show or anything like that. It was just numbers and things.

So statewide, it's not too bad. And federally, the income tax is—we pay our taxes, of course, and we take all the deductions we can. And there are several types of Internal Revenue agents in my opinion, and that's good and bad—I guess just two kinds. And we had some—. Of course, they check us every year when you get as big as we are, not because we're crooks, but just because of our size, we're checked every year. And I've had some that are just absolutely miserable; you want to hit 'em in the nose. And you're a crook, and they are insulting, and so on. And we've had some that were just super, that we actually got to be friends. One little fella (and I can dig up his name if it's important) that—he got transferred away, and here and there, and he's from the Bay Area. And when he's in town sometimes, the gal'll say, "Hey, So-and-so's out here."

And, "Send him in," and come in, and, "Hi, how're you doing?" you know, 'cause he was intrigued with how interesting our business was, and so on and so on.

And when the government had it coining he said, "Hey, we get this." And when they

didn't really, or when there was a question, then he wasn't—you know.

So many of 'em—and it seems to be getting worse—will just demand everything. And maybe I shouldn't say that, generally, because—but there are some that are just terrible. And we had one fella here (I forget his name), just got transferred out, that was really mad about the car collection, and that bugged the heck out of him. He actually assessed me one time personally. And I think we had eleven hundred cars, and the deductions and all on it, so he assessed me three million dollars one year, 'cause the cars were personal and not company. And my answer to that was, "How can I drive eleven hundred cars?" you know, just it's ridiculous on the face of it. But he made that claim. Of course, we got it thrown out.

But that's about all as far as Internal Revenue's concerned—I mean some are good, some are bad; you gotta live with them and fight 'em.

How about the justice department, the FBI and so forth?

Oh, they're wonderful, super. The FBI—the local, and well, all that we've ever run into were just the local, but they're the national, of course. It's usually when there's a bomb thing or something, but my association with them has just been—couldn't be any better. And then as far as the company's concerned, I just say a hundred percent, just straight down, just super.

This is so different from what you hear about Las Vegas. IRS or FBI agents just marching into one or more of the casinos. It's the kind of thing that you don't hear about here kinda confusing, but I guess mostly bomb threats—that they call, and, "There's four bombs planted in Harrah's, and if we don't have four hundred thousand dollars

three miles from Stateline by nine o'clock Thursday, why, we're gonna"—they're gonna explode 'em. And then we'd call, and they'd work real good. And we'd have a contact, and some of 'em, we'd actually go down and plant the money or whatever—we'd follow their advice, of course. I think one case or another, where we've actually left the money, and the others, why, we just left dummies. But, of course, they know, and they can tell; they can read it and say, "Oh, this is a so-and-so type," and they're usually right. But we've had, well, three or four of those, that were serious enough so we called—well, we always called an FBI.

But the kidnapping, no, not really. There've been threats, but just it's usually a phone call. And I think ninety-nine percent of those, a bunch of people are drunk somewhere, and so, "I'll call up Harrah's, and scare the hell out of 'em," and get on, you know, somethin' like that. It's never been that, but a lot of bomb threats. But they've fallen off lately for some reason.

How about the federal and state tax structures—are they fair?

Oh, well, I don't think so, no, not at all. Well, I shouldn't say not at all, but statewide the gambling tax is city, county, and state, which is okay; that's all right. But the state is on the gross, which is not fair 'cause you can be losin' money and payin' a terrible tax, and that's not right. And that got in there, and that's the way it is, and so we're stuck with it. And we pay an awful lot of taxes; I don't think we should pay another dime ever! It's just tremendous; it's, you know—well, you know what it is—supports most of the state.

Then on the federal level, there's no one to blame except the politics over the years, and soak the rich, and give the poor a free ride.

Every year you think it can't get any worse, and then it does. And I've always felt that; before I ever had a dime I felt that a graduated tax was unfair. You know, it should be twenty percent or forty percent or sixty—whatever it is—and it should be the same. And you make two dollars, you pay a percent of two dollars; it you make two million, you pay a percent of two million. And it just discourages. And graduated income tax—and I've been there a few times in the real high brackets. And you figure, "What the hell! Why should I gamble five hundred thousand on that thing? If I win, I'm gonna make twenty thousand a year to keep; and if I lose, I blow the full—whole five hundred. So I'll just sit on my fanny."

And it's tact, and 'course Congress refuses to recognize it, that when you do lower taxes, then—you know. And there's plenty of entrepreneurs in this country, just waitin' to give 'em a chance. And boy, they'll be goin' in all directions and inventing things and making things and manufacturing things and starting new types of restaurants and new types of stores and just makin' so much money, and the government just take a flat twenty percent or ten percent (whatever) and they just have so much money—unbelievable. But, politically, as they say, which I don't—I hate to even use the word 'cause to me it should be the same all the way; you know, right's right and wrong's wrong. And they say, "Well, technically this is correct, and politically that's correct." Well, you know, I'd be the world's worst politician 'cause I don't think that way. And I couldn't; I hate to say all politicians are phony, but most of 'em are. And I don't mean that derogatory; to be a successful politician, you gotta be kinda phony. You gotta stand up and smile and shake hands, and, "Gee, I'm glad to see ya," you know, "How ya doin'?" when you couldn't care less; but you gotta get their votes.

Like they say, the ideal form of government—and I agree with it—is a benevolent dictatorship 'cause they just do what's right and do it right now, and not a lot of waste effort and not a lot of waste money. But, of course, how can you arrange to have a benevolent dictatorship, except occasionally they have 'em, but it just happened.

But I don't let it get me down (that's real important), and I don't let anything get me down. So you do the best you can, and then the hell with it, 'cause otherwise you just kill yourself worryin' and sweatin' and—. Pay the damn taxes, and that's the way it goes.

UNIONS

In that early period, was there any talk about unionizing the dealers and having strikes and so forth?

I don't remember any threat of unionizing the dealers that far back—just none.

How did you work out the strike in '49? Do you remember the big Fourth of July strike in '49?

Yeah, I remember. Yeah, I hadn't paid too much attention to it. In fact, that's how we got the union in 'cause they just—I don't really know how it got in. I think just because we weren't payin' attention. And all of a sudden we had a union, and I don't know how it happened. I did know, of course, but I don't know now.

But the dealers—there was no thought of it in this part of the state, at least—wasn't even discussed because dealers were very well paid compared to the other jobs in the community; so they were just doin' fine. And then the bartenders— and when they went out—and some of ours did and some of 'em didn't—then the ones that didn't were

threatened—and they went out—which I didn't blame 'em. So then we ran the bars ourself for a little while, and then it was not really worth the trouble, so we closed 'em up. But it caught my attention. And then later when we got around to it, we decertified, which you can do. I remember we had a picket in Reno; we didn't have any picket at the Lake 'cause the Lake's so remote. But we had elections both places and won 'em both handily. And so since then, we've had no unions except our musicians, which technically aren't really Harrah's employees; they're employees of the orchestra leader—or not technically; that's a fact. Of course, the union tries to argue about it, but we pay the orchestra leader, and he can hire whatever violinist he wants and tire her—him or her—and hire another one. That's his job, so it's not a problem at all any more. Of course, who knows with all the new things happening? We'll cross that bridge when we come to it, but we are very aware of it all the time.

Did you help in supporting the Right to Work law, then, after that?

Oh boy, I sure did! Yeah. I'm sure I contributed and spoke for it to anybody that would listen to me. But I didn't go up and down the street or anything. It's the same as I support anything today. You do what you can do. And of course, you're so limited to what you can do that—who knows? Discouraging sometimes, but that's the way it is.

I know I was real happy with that. I think we won—what did we have—three elections, didn't we?—in the state?

I wondered if you'd like to talk a little bit more about the labor problem. You're one of the state's biggest employers; and even in that

early period, in the time up to before you went up to Tahoe, you had a lot of people working for you and here a couple of decertification elections and so forth. We haven't had the kind of violence here that they have had in Vegas, for instance; but the problems have been just about as severe, and during the Right to Work fight the problems were really in front of everybody.

Well, I feel as strongly as anybody can feel about the Right to Work. It's American fundamental, I think, and the union abuses are just nationwide or—I don't even want to go into that. They're so obvious that—you know. This isn't a talk on unionization, but in our company—and I will say to anybody there are companies deserve unionization, because they treat their employees terribly, and that's why there are unions today. If everyone had treated their employees as they would like to be treated themselves over the years, there'd be no unions, but so many companies have asked for it. And they deserve it. But I think we haven't asked for it, and we don't deserve it, and it's just another added problem. We have enough problems as it is, but unionization is a super problem. I'll say one thing (and this can be published; I have no objection to it), I was in Vegas and visited many places, but there was one place that one of the owners (or whoever—I forgot) said they had thirteen unions. I complimented him on a good operation. And he said, "Thank you, but," he said, "I spend about a third or a fourth of my time actually running the place, and the other two-thirds or three-fourths, dealing with the unions. But," he said, "I have thirteen." He said, "You don't have any" (our musicians really don't count the way it is), he said, "You don't have any, and," he said, "do you realize how good that is?"

I said, "Yes, I do."

And he said, "Well, let me emphasize it." He said, "No matter what the unions do—" (and of course, which is no secret either)—but [he noted that] one way of avoiding unionization is to treat your employees properly and to have a board of review, which we do, so a person can't be discharged politically—they have to be proven they were at fault. The other thing is wages and benefits. And you have to stay even or ahead of the union, which we do.

And occasionally, we have another holiday or something, and some of our people will say, "That'll cost another four hundred thousand dollars or something, and—" which four hundred thousand is a lot of money.

But still, you have to look at the big picture, which this man told me, which I already knew; but I was happy that he told me, anyway. He said, "No matter what it costs you, no matter what it costs you, do it to keep the unions out, and you can run your business.

And really, it is a sad story that this man who I respect—super guy, super operator—and he's just in a straitjacket. I'd hate to be a head-and-head competitor of him without unions, 'cause he's right on it. That's a dirty shame that he has to spend—well, he works about a twelve-hour day, so it's eight hours a day with union problems. And that isn't what the unionization was meant to be. It was meant to uplift the abused worker, not to cost the management for mismanagement and unnecessary expenses. Look at the railroads—there's a good example.

DAY TO DAY OPERATION

One of the points on your outline is about your reputation as being a perfectionist in the business. How did you develop these practices that led you to have this reputation, and what kind of satisfaction does it give you to have made a place that is so nearly perfect?

Well, it's far from perfect, but it is better than, I'd say, all of our competitors in that respect. And it's a personal thing, I guess, that it is just like I've said, probably, 'cause I've said it many times—that I like our customers to be treated as I would like to be treated. When I go to the men's room, I like it clean, and I like toilet paper and towels and soap and a good light and—. And then the restaurant, I like it to be—this chair to be comfortable and the things clean and the menu not dog-eared, and just on and on and on. That's the way I like to live, and I thought—and I'm right, I'm sure—that the general public likes that.

And it puzzles me today (and I guess as long as I live, I'll be puzzled) . Just recently, I was somewhere in a rather popular restaurant (I won't name it, but I can remember where it was) and good food and all. And I was given a menu, and it was years old and greasy and torn and—menus, so what do they cost? Then I went to the men's room and it looked like 1905 or something—just—. It wasn't too dirty, but the facilities were—and quite a large place—it was a dinner house. And maybe they would seat several hundred people, and I think the men's room was maybe one-at-a-time sort of a situation—just unbelievable! The lock on the door wouldn't work. And then I went there a month later, and the lock on the door still didn't work. You know, just—I don't understand it.

So to me it's not surprising; I'm just—. The surprising thing is that other people don't do it. That's what I—. Do you—do you [chuckling] understand?

I'm puzzled, and I've asked many people why—the dog-eared menu and the dirty restroom and the dirt in the parkin' lot that hasn't been cleaned in two months. And they have to see it every day! That's, you know—they could've cleaned it this morning and then trash blown in, and it's dirty now; but when it

goes day after day, I just—it's beyond me—I just—.

You know, you've got to hire people to keep things clean.

Well, I mean like these restrooms—I mean they could— with the amount of business they do—and they could put in a ten-thousand-dollar men's room and not know it. And then the cleanliness, of course, why, that's—maybe they don't like to hire janitors or somethin'. Well, the place isn't really too dirty; it's just that the one I'm speaking of was just 1908 facilities.

It's amazing the people continue to go there.

Uh-huh. Well, the food's awful good. [Chuckles] Oh, we go there—we love it! They treat us so neat! And the food's really the best. The men's room—huh!

Would you like to talk about local politics, in the early '50s period?

Yeah. I'm not sure of when—I get the years mixed up, but politics when—just no big deal, as I remember—the local politics. And so that [Baker] gang got in there; it was

Right after Len Harris.

Yeah, well, Len was a likable guy—Len was okay. I liked Len, really. He wasn't the greatest mayor, but he was a fun guy to be around. And he pushed you real hard to buy his lousy meat. And I remember gettin' after our guys, you know—"Buy some meat from Len Harris." And I was real serious.

And they said, "Well, what'll we do with it?" [Laughing]

And I said, "Well, serve it!" [Laughing]

They said, "We can't! It's too awful," which it was; I got into it. And I don't know to this day—I'll give him the benefit—. There's two thoughts—either he was puttin' the muscle on you a little bit and sellin' you bum meat at a high price, or he didn't know. And I like to go by the second one, 'cause he was real involved and politically ambitious—he wanted to be governor or president (I don't know what) once he had the taste, which you've seen thousands of times. They get the taste of public office and get elected, why, their life will change completely. So that's the way I like to think of Len 'cause I liked him. I think [he] was just so involved in politics that he really didn't know what was goin' on in his meat packing place.

Do you have any other names there?

I knew 'em all, but they don't come to me.

Len Harris came after Tank Smith's administration; that was a fairly quiet period. And then they said that nobody could be a worse mayor than Len Harris, and they elected Bud Baker.

Yeah, and proved themselves wrong. But Bud and that whole gang were just terrible, then. I'll go into that—I don't remember any names, but I can tell you all about 'em. But they were just a bunch of crooks—all of 'em or most of em—and just terrible.

I don't think I should go into that because there was a lot of dirty payoff stuff there, some of which I know about; and I don't want it [oral history] restricted. Some of those guys are still walkin' around, you know.

My feeling on the Baker administration—it was that there was dishonesty there. And the strange things that were happening in the city. One I knew about, which is the

one of £ the record or would—restricted—would be George Carr, who I knew very well and was a good friend of mine. And until that happened—and he got a big chunk of money (I don't know exactly how much) on that Coliseum deal. I know he retired right afterwards, and I don't know if he's worked since. And it was common knowledge, or among my crowd of people it was no secret at the time, what had happened, but nobody wanted to do anything about it, and I didn't. I thought, "Well, nobody else cares—. I was very distressed at the way the city was going, but I thought, "If nobody else cares, I don't want to get in where I have to look over my shoulder when I walk home at night." So I let it pass. I don't know if I should've or not, but I did. But he's the only one I know definitely.

But the rest of it, I—just it was very distasteful, I remember that. And quite often I (I may have told you this earlier) —when things are distasteful to me, I try to put 'em out of my mind, which I may have done there. But the George Carr thing was so shocking, 'cause he was a close friend of mine. I'd bought cars from him, and we'd raced each other and drank with each other. And I kinda liked George until that happened, and then it really turned me off. Well, that's all I want to say about that.

It was the darkest part in Reno's history without any question, at least in my time.

Is he still around town?

I think he is.

Why, he's the kind of guy that about every two years you turn around, there he is. I remember he's bald, and then he had a hairpiece that said "hairpiece" all over it. And he was so proud of it! And I know him well enough—I said, "Where'd you get the phony hairpiece, George?"

So then the next time I saw him—within a week—he didn’t have it on, and I said, “What did you do—get dressed in a hurry and—?” which really isn’t nice, although I don’t have as much hair as I’ve had—why, you shouldn’t needle people that are bald. That’s not nice. But when they wear wigs and things—.

Would you describe a typical working day, before the opening at Tahoe?

Well, there was the drinking period which was up through— oh, wait a minute now; the casino opened in ’46. Well, that was the drinkin’ period, which I think I got into that a little bit with you about how I got to be a heavy drinker. I liked to drink, and I drank more and more. But I think possibly, if I hadn’t got into the casino business where the bar was right in the place, then I might not’ve really got so heavy. But when we opened with the bars—and I liked to drink, and people would—as in Reno—come in and buy a drink, a courtesy drink, and I would have a drink with them, which I liked to have—I liked the drink—which you’ve seen many bar people that will just take a sip and—which I learned to do later. But still you have a hundred sips, that’s a lot of liquor! But I enjoyed it, really. And being as young as I was, I could maneuver fairly well; I couldn’t do it today at all with all that liquor. But it would start, well, at first, maybe five o’clock, and then later it moved up till noon or something. And then I would drink all evening—have dinner, usually—then drink and get feelin’ pretty good, but still could walk and talk and do my job.

And then my job at that time was just counting the boxes, as we said, which was usually midnight and eight in the morning and four in the afternoon (it was eight-hour periods); or maybe I think it was six, two, and ten—yeah. That made more sense because

that was like the evening shift ran into two, and then it was really graveyard. So my job was to count the boxes. I didn’t count the morning shift, the ten a.m., but I counted the six o’clock and the two o’clock, and that was my regular job and my principal job outside of the overall, which was kinda fun, really, ’cause there was always two of us. We were right on the up-and-up, and it was usually me and Wayne Martin and-or Warren Nelson and-or the next guy, and-or Bob Ring. And one of us was always there. But when I was around, oh, I loved it, especially when you’d had a good shift, and it was fun to open those boxes and find ’em full of hundred-dollar bills. And of course, you’d have to look at the “fills” instantly, and maybe you’d have ten thousand in hundred-dollar bills, but you might have twelve thousand in fills; so you would look at the fills first, and if they’ve very few or none, then all the money was profit on that game—not counting the overheads. So it was fun; I enjoyed it, and I like to count the money today. I don’t do it often, but sometimes. But I like to set ’em just straight, and they all have to go the same way. And a crumpled bill, even the ones, I’d straighten ’em all out and—. Then I’m kinda simple-minded, and it was—like I’d tell my wife today that—like I’ll see a man [when] we’re traveling somewhere, and then we stop and there’s a man has a sign, says, “Stop,” while the grader does something. And then finally the grader will move and he’ll turn the sign around, it’ll say, “Go.” And I’ll tell her, “Now there’s a job I could handle!” you know. And I said, “Furthermore, I’d enjoy it!” [Laughing] So that was countin’ the money. That was the job I could handle, and I loved it. But then I haven’t done that in fifteen years, I guess.

And then when they had some scandals which—and I questioned that a little bit, but I understand their reasoning. Nowadays I

don't think they want an owner to count the money any more because there were so many of 'em puttin' it in their pocket. But to me I think there should be some—I think if an owner wants to count his money, then he could ask for a state agent or something; but I understand the reason for it. But still it's sure a lot of fun to count it. Think of all the money Fitz has counted over the years. I understand the way he worked, he counted every shift. Of course, he lived right there.

But that whiled my day. Then at two o'clock, the boxes'd come off and two-thirty, three, we're finished. And usually we'd go over—and maybe if we had an extra good day, we'd go over and have a drink just “on the square,” we called it, where we weren't with the customers; maybe Wayne and I'd go have a drink.

And then quite often we'd go—Wayne was pretty good; he'd go have a drink with you somewhere, but he was a good homebody. And I was a drinker and kind of a playboy type, so I liked to circulate. But Grand bar—Grand Buffet, they called it, but it was the Grand bar—and that was right out our back door, so that was almost a must on the way home. And I think I mentioned that earlier, didn't I? And Johnny and—I met a lot of people in the Grand that—Reno people—Bill Graham, and on and on and on.

Then after I'd leave the Grand, depending—and I knew a lot of places in town, like the Riverside I knew Bud von Hatten, bartender there. He was a real good friend of mine. In fact, I took him up to Idaho a couple of times to go huntin' and fishin' and all. So I'd go see Bud; he worked the graveyard. He knew a lot of people, and Bud was fun. It was fun to be in there, and Bud ran a bar good, too. He was all alone, but he was a real husky guy. Anybody get into trouble, I never saw Bud hit anybody or anything; but when people

would get—he would straighten it out and just—well, he always grinned, and when he quit grinning, why, there was a message there. I think he's workin' at the Mapes now. Oh, he's a wonderful guy—Bud von Hatten. Has a big grin, bald head, and goin' guy.

But the Riverside was usually the last one, and it was kinda interesting. Usually, there was nothin' dam'; there were just a bunch of guys hangin' around there, mainly. And they had games there, and the games were crooked ([I] forget who ran 'em at the time). But they were crooked, which a lot of games were that way, which if you're gonna be crooked, it was the way to run it. [In] little amounts, why, it was on the square; but then when it got real heavy, why, then, look out! That's the way the Riverside was in those days.

Then I'd get home maybe four or five. And I usually lived on South Virginia, it seemed, in various places. Well, I lived at the El Reno apartments for a while, which I liked very much. And then I got out of there, unfortunately, and regretted it. And I kinda moved around town. I lived at the Napes for a while, and I lived at the Riverside for a while. I think I lived at the Mapes for a couple of years, and I lived at the Riverside for two or three—till I got kicked out. I like to say that in both places, and not that I was—I paid my rent on time, and I didn't cause any fuss. But Charlie's [Napes] hotel wasn't really too successful in many ways. But one mistake he made was, he had these apartments, which I had; and you just shouldn't have apartments over a casino. You should have rooms, where people can come and go, which they figured out. And then, yes, he was very nice; he asked me to move. First I was a little surprised; and then when he explained why, it made so much sense that, you know

And then I moved to the Riverside, and that was the Wertheimer days, which was really

fun. And I don't know if they moved me out or—I think they did. I think it was the same reason. I had an apartment there, and I think they—I wonder if they eliminated those or not. [I'm] tryin' to think where I moved to, then.

It was fun livin' there. I loved it.

And then—see, Charlie opened in '46, I think. And I quit drinkin' in '52. I think I was livin' at the Golden then, or stayin' there. And then I think I went back to the—. Well, drinking or not drinking, when I lived at the hotels, I just walked home (which was really good in a way—I wasn't driving) and walked to work. I really liked it, though. Although I was drinking a lot, I was still very efficient because I hung around here and went home, went to bed, and got up, and came back to work; so that was pretty good.

And then when I—moved somewhere—and then when I quit drinking in '52, I think I was livin' at the Riverside at the time. And then, of course, that gave me another six or eight hours a day that I didn't have to waste sleepin' it off. And I could walk to work, so boy, I really put in sixteen- eighteen-hour days; and they were—every hour counted. So things really moved then.

Of Course, then, you know, more—and you pay attention— why, of course, the money was a lot better then; and it multiplies of itself 'cause I didn't spend as much, and I worked harder so I made more. And then, of course, I was more attentive to business; and I'm sure I saw some things that had been going on that I really hadn't noticed before that were corrected.

And then the expansion started. You know, I'd been in not too good of shape for years and what—I mean I paid off the loans to get open, but then I hadn't really accumulated too much. Then the soberness came along and payin' attention. I think our first move was buyin' out the Hobsons next door. And

then that'd double the size of the place, and that was quite successful.

Wondered if you would like to comment on how women work out in the organization.

Well, the reason we started with women was oh, we'd used women always as in the checking capacity in the Bingo parlors (afterward to count the cards) . And then we opened here, it was all men dealers, except Harolds Club had lady dealers. And I thought that looked pretty good and brought it up with Warren Nelson and some of the old-timers, and they objected strongly. "Women couldn't deal," and so on, so on, "couldn't protect the game"—that was a big thing.

And I said, "Well, we got pit bosses now," and on and on and da da da. And they were—it was really just anti. Finally figured it out. But during the discussion, I wanted to get along with everyone, and I said, "Well, look at Harolds Club. They got 'em."

And then it was common that whenever I'd point out Harolds Club—Harolds Club had a lot of business, and their slot machines were loose, and a lot of slot play, women dealers, lots of "21" play—and whenever I'd point it out to my management, they would scoff and say, "Oh-ho-ho, they don't know how to run a place!" And still the Bank Club, who my advisors admired, at that time had one-fourth of the business that Harolds had. Harolds was going huckley-buck, as they say; and the Bank Club was slowly dying, but everyone [thought the] Bank Club was the thing. We followed, and then just because of my advisors, men dealers, and white shirts and ties, and sour pusses, and shills. And we finally got some women dealers which loosened the place up, and got rid of the shills, maybe put the fellas in somethin' besides white shirts and ties; it really livened the place up.

But the big thing with women, I think the reason I did it, which I observed, was, our place was very beautiful for the period, very attractive. Tourists would look in, and they wouldn't come in. And I was afraid that because it was so nice, which in some cases, of course, was true. But many times—and I figured it out—I think I overheard somebody say it once or twice, there were no women in there. And we did have cocktail waitresses, but they looked in and saw all these men standin' and it was kinda scary. And they looked in Harolds Club, and here these ladies there, and in they'd go. So that So that was a convincer where I was concerned. So we tried ladies, and they worked out fine over the years; they're excellent.

And then after the "21" and wheels came along real fast—wheel dealers—then Craps was later and slower. And for one reason was—it slowed it up—was that maybe it wasn't "ladylike," which I don't necessarily agree with; but a certain type of lady can deal Craps very graciously and be a lady. But they are handicapped by stature; they have to be rather tall—a lady Crap dealer—to be able to reach all the bets, but they worked out fine there.

Then a few years ago, we went into lady pit bosses. We have a different name for 'em, but we've had several of those for years in Reno and Tahoe. And then just recently we have a woman on our board of directors. But there is a innate (I don't know if that's the right word) reluctance to put women in our company—I'm sorry to say it, but it's true—in positions of responsibility. And about the only ones we get—or generally the only ones—is when I just pound the table and say, "Hey!" And then it gets done. But without that it just doesn't happen, and I don't know. And everyone will deny up and down, "Oh no, we're not anti-women!" And I don't think they are, really, but they just don't think that way. I don't know. Kind of disturbs me, and I don't

know the answer to it. But maybe as younger fellas come up—but I think Rome really is anti-women in high positions; and he would deny it to the death, but I think it's true. They do a super job.

You have been able to use some in the non-gambling supervision, too.

I think we only have two now. We have a level where we have cocktail parties and dinner once a year—everybody. I forget what it's called. Have it in Reno and have it at Tahoe, and I think there's only two women there—Maggie Beaumont, she's in our clothing—and some gal that was in advertising that left, retired. I think that's all.

Is it a problem with the other women who work here that they don't see that as a possibility for advancing?

I don't know. 'course, we're as good as any company, but it still is not nearly as good as it could be.

PLAYERS AND OTHER COMPETITORS IN RENO

Have you had any contacts with the system players?

Yeah, we've had a lot of 'em. Most of the systems don't work. There is some; the card counter system does work. But we don't have any problem with that because they really screw up the game, 'cause they have the whole table to themselves and so-and-so. So we just say, "No, he can't sit down and play. And someone wants to sit by you and bet three dollars, they can bet—do it," which the system player—and they'll crab and call up and, you know, "go to the Gaming Control,"

and all that nonsense; but they're not really a problem.

And the only system player I remember that was really good was [LaVere] Redfield. He was a genius, and he could, he could beat you. He beat us many times, and I don't know, in the overall, I think he probably came out ahead of us. [He] played many times for huge amounts of money. But he had a system that was a good one, and he had the nerve— well, he had the capital and the nerve. And so many people will have a system that's pretty good, and it doesn't work too good at the beginning, well, then you do have to increase; they're all progressive somehow. And then they'll—"Well, gee whiz, it's not working," and then they'll just start playin' the game. And of course, you're not playin' the system, then you're just another customer.

But Redfield—and I've observed him through—we have a lookout—I watched him play; he was an interesting man. He would be betting ten thousand dollars on a number, or four numbers, and he got there by starting at four hundred or something, and it would get to ten thousand. Then his next bet would be sixteen thousand and without, you know—instead of going like that [hand in mouth], he just put it there. And then the sixteen would go, and the next bet was—I think we'd get him up to maybe even thirty—could beat him—and it would come out there as quick as your head could [count]. And usually he would catch the last bet; not always we got him, but he would catch the last one and zing, he'd be out, and winners, and here we go. But he would, and so many that I think, "My God!" I knew he was a wealthy man—and of course, cheap in many ways, which I think was kind of an act with him. But he sure knew how to figure out the odds and also how to play the game. He's the best I ever saw, without any doubt. And I admired

the man just—I admired him in many ways. He minded his own business and handled his affairs, bought real estate cheap, bought bread cheap [laughing], and he was nice—. He'd come in and we'd be talking; then, win or lose fifty thousand, then we'd invite him for lunch, our guys would (I never had lunch with him, but I'd be near)—and he'd hesitate, you know. Oh, he didn't know if he should. And he would go and just eat a little bit, you know, and then on the way out he'd thank me, "Oh, that was so nice of you, Mr. Harrah, to have me to lunch," and just his—you know, the two cents on a loaf of bread and actually—and we've seen him do that— lose fifty thousand dollars and walk home, and we'd check on him to see—or maybe he'd win fifty, and we were afraid he'd get hit over the head—and have security observe him, you know? And he'd stop at a little grocery store and walk twelve blocks and go in and get a loaf of bread, you know, for four cents off! I thought, "How can a mind—" you know, thirty thousand dollars on a roll of the Roulette wheel and two or four cents on a loaf of bread in the same day, the same party! I mean just—it's unfathomable! And he just had his own little compartments there. But he was a fun man. And when he had all the silver and it was stolen and—oh, that was—silver dollars, gold.

Yeah, he was a good guy. We tried to buy land from him, and I don't think we ever did. He would give you a price, and it was usually a little above the market. And that would, you know—no offers, no nothin' just, there's the price, which you can't—there's nothin' wrong with that. Yeah, he was okay. Yeah, he was fun.

He drove Fitz up the wall, you know. Oooh! I remember he had—I'm not too close to Fitz, but I was real close to Bill Cashill, and he'd tell me, he'd say, "What are you doin' with [Redfield]?" 'course, Fitz, he gave him a big limit. Plus he had a single-Q wheel, which

cuts the odds. Redfield really gave him fits. We had to get it from the outside, but it was a lot more than ours. And Fitz finally had to cut him way down 'cause he was just—he couldn't get away.

The characters like Redfield are kind of dying out, aren't they?

Yeah, oh, you got some new ones—I mean in a different way, like this the man—it's like Cashill, only it isn't—the truck stop out here, Boomtown. Cashill, yeah. He's entirely different, but he's a comparatively newcomer, at least for me; but he's go-go-go and has a nice operation out there. I go out every once in a while, and I tell our guys, which sometimes I'm a little disappointed—they get in their little shells and go home and come to work, go home, and—. I remember I asked at a meeting—well, I said, “How many been to Boomtown?” And I think only one. I said, “God, get out of your snug you get your kicks, why—. I sure believe in workin' hard and makin' money, but I believe in enjoyment, too. But of course, if I'd had people lookin' for me like Fitz, and was in his condition, I'm sure I wouldn't be traipsin' all over the world, or ridin' a motorcycle, or anything. But I respect them. They're good operators; they're good, honest operators. They're pretty easy competition, too, as they don't really try to—to my knowledge—to cater too much to the players. The games are on the square, and there it is, and so-and-so. But too much back slapping or comping or anything like that—take it or leave it, which is their way. It's their right.

HARRAH'S HOTEL, RENO

How about talking about the planning for the hotel which started in oh, '63 or so.

Well, of course, we knew we needed a hotel at Tahoe and Reno, but I don't think the planning started that early. I think the planning started about the time that the Golden Hotel property became available. And that's when the Tomerlin boys had it and didn't operate it too well 'cause they were just—were good fellas but just young kids. I believe their father bought it, and then either he died or gave it to them or something. And so they inherited it in their twenties, a casino hotel in Reno which they didn't know how to operate, and it was a very poor operation. And then somehow they started to rebuild and ran out of money. And then things just got worse and worse until—I forget the touch-off, what did it, but anyway, we could acquire the property, which we did, which filled in beautifully with what we already had.

So then we rebuilt the hotel. As the steel had been standing for several years and had become rusty, I believe we took it down and reused some of it, although it wasn't quite as strong as we wanted. But we just about completely rebuilt it to our specs, which are pretty good—not as good as Tahoe, amenity-wise, but it's a good hotel.

That opened in '69, and was an instant success. I imagine the overall occupancy since it opened must be over ninety percent 'cause it runs a hundred quite often. And for several years, there, we had a policy of never having a hundred percent. They would always have three or four rooms for latecomers. But then we took a second look at it and discovered there were very few of those, and we could educate our good customers to give us a call. And plus if a good customer did show up without a room at two in the morning, which was a rarity, we usually—not always, but ninety-nine times out of a hundred—maneuver around, or someone was there, or it's an old friend, and you could get 'em

a room. We now have a hundred percent occupancy, but over the years that did hurt our percentage.

An old story, which is very true, that you should keep saying to yourself if you're in the hotel business or the rooming business, is an unrented room—one night, say, a night in a room that's unrented for one night—that's gone forever. So I think that's what brought us around us, sayin', "Hey, let's rent these rooms."

It seems to me that everything I've ever read on hotel management is nothing like that kind of percentage.

I think Seventies—yeah. No, like fifty is—you know—fair-poor, and sixty and seventy is pretty good. But when we tell people, you know, that we're ninety to a hundred, both places, they find it hard to believe. It's very gratifying, really. It shows we're doin' somethin' right.

What do you think is the most important thing that you're doing right?

Oh, well, to put it, well, you know, just, it's treating the customers as we would like to be treated. And the hotel, they check you in; the desk clerks should smile, and if they have a reservation, they should find the reservation like that [snaps fingers]. And the room should be available unless it's ten in the morning. I think check-out time's noon; well, then the room should be ready by one or two. And that if they wanted a certain kind of a suite and it was confirmed, they should get that. And when they get to the room, it should be clean and made up and a rose and all the little amenities we have. Should be quiet, they shouldn't be bugged. And the lock should be secure on the door, and the maid should be prompt and good and—.

When they call room service—that's another specialty of ours, like breakfast. Their breakfast isn't there in, I think it's twenty minutes or possibly less, well, there's a written report comes down—and it's usually fifteen minutes. And that's bacon and eggs and juice and the whole thing, which just gets a tremendous amount of—because I travel a lot and, well, like at the Plaza Hotel in New York, which is one of the so-called super hotels in New York. And I like it—its location and all, although it is overrated. But I've had room service there where it's been over an hour. And I've called two or three times, and "Oh, it's on the way, it's on the way," and just ridiculous! Breakfast, you know—you eat breakfast; you have something to do. You want to get up, have breakfast, and go about your way. And when you have to wait, it's absolutely—and there's no—'cause when you check it out, and why didn't it get there? And it'll be cooked, the cook will get the order, he will cook it, he puts it here, and then the waiter doesn't pick it up. He's talking, or he's upstairs in another delivering another order. Well, there has to be a system where if he isn't there, someone else— that it doesn't wait. As soon as that's cooked [pounds table], away it goes. It can be done.

Also, we have floor stations at the Lake, especially. Those things—which really bugs me—in hotels in this country— 'cause they've had that in Europe forever. Like the Savoy Hotel in London and the Ritz in Paris, and any good hotel, they have a little commissary on each floor. And you can get just about anything. The Savoy is my favorite because they have a butler—he's like a butler—on the floor, and you ring room service for breakfast, and you ring a bell, and by the time you pull your finger, he's unlocked the door, and he's there in his tie and all, and his pencil and paper. "Yes, sir, what would you like?" And

da da da da da da. And he's gone. "Thank you." And just six minutes, eight minutes, unless it's fancy eggs or something, why, there's your breakfast. And everything! And the flower and the napkin and the ice water and the—just—it can be done.

But you have to want to do it, and it's that simple. Overall, I guess, it's to please the public, please them! And they—"Gee, that's neat! Remember the—let's stay there if we can." And of course, we have lots of turnaways. It's so simple; I just don't know why—. I'm glad other people don't do it; if you start competitors, or some of 'em don't—. Just as I travel the world, I'm puzzled so many—. So many places, I'm pleased, like the Savoy. So many places, where they're just—like New York is very bad, generally. Like the customers, just, enough of them! "Give me your money! Get out of here!" That isn't what it's all about. Huh!

You're really a student of good service, aren't you? How do you think you became that way?

Well, I don't know how. I mean I do—I know what I am, but I like things—. And my folks, they liked things nice, although they weren't as picky as I was. I don't know—just, I answer you, I'm puzzled that other people aren't that way. You order, the waitress takes your order, and she should go give it to the cook, and he should cook it, and she should pick it up and bring it to you. And when it isn't done, it bugs me. And whether it's an airline reservation or whatever. 'cause people should do their job; that's what they're gettin' paid for. I like a comfortable life. I don't like trouble; I like things to go smoothly. I like everybody to be happy, having a good time. When things are like that, there's plenty of problems without makin' 'em. So if you can avoid problems—'cause there's plenty. Surely in the daily report here, there's about six or eight or ten, where

somethin' was wrong and somethin' was wrong and somethin' was—and that's when we're trying. And if you're not trying, it's just—well, then it's really super awful.

You must have some particular characteristic or technique with your staff that makes them want to be that way, too.

Oh, yeah. It's big, really big, 'cause you have to really start—I mean you have to be equipped for it, too. That may be the reason for the others, 'cause our kitchens and our room service and our extra—we have an extra elevator now, each place, for room service, so the room people don't have to wait for the elevator (which was an old excuse, and usually true, but—). And that's dumb to start—why should room service have to wait while somebody's going down to check out? Room service should go like that [claps]. And also, well, there're so many things you can—. Like I think at the Lake, we have something on every floor, and I think in Reno here, we're eighteen or twenty stories—no, twenty-four. I think on the twelfth floor, somewhere in there, we have a kind of a helpful kitchen. So if you're on the twenty-fourth floor, your food doesn't have to come from One, it comes from Twelve. And all those little things. And then the employees have to be trained, of course, to move it. And it can be done. And we've done it for years. And it costs a little more, maybe, but you make it up in the happy customers. And I've had so many people tell me (and I know they've told others, of course, thousands of times)—very wealthy people—and the big thing is, he got his breakfast when he was hungry, and it was the way he ordered it, and that starts him off on a wonderful mood. And I've been through that. Anyone that travels has.

But we stamp every ticket, when it's ordered and when it's delivered to the waiter,

or his pickup time. So we can check back when somethin' goofs, where the goof was. But you have to have people—you mentioned earlier—and they're not too easy to find, but you can find them—people that want to. There are people that just—you can talk to them forever, and they're not gonna do that. Then you find people that do want to work and do want to please, and your screening and all—you have to dig through and find those people. It isn't too easy.

All of this is in the background of the planning for your hotel, and you must have spent a lot of time thinking about how you were going to do this.

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, of course. Well, the hotel, we had planned a hotel for years, either Reno or Tahoe or both. And then over the years, I had a file called the "Hotel File." Then everywhere I traveled, any idea I liked, I brought it back. Then when we got to planning, we went through all that, and it was, where a lot of your elevator, and your room service, and on and on and on and on and on. There were many things in there that I'd forgotten that we incorporated—I'm a great believer in copyin' a good idea. So yeah, we had that.

And then we had our architect at the time. We had the experts in hotel planning. There're proper ways of doing things. You get an architect that's qualified in the line you're doing, and then get your experts; the food, why, you really need technical food experts to lay out a kitchen. And we'll have our food people go over it. But the—well, it's not range—whatever it is today, but that goes here, and this goes there, and then this goes over here [gestures], not there, you know. All that, and then the way the kitchen—there's a flow, and all that sort of thing. That's a real specialty.

Of course, the experts charge a lot, and they're well worth it; you want to get a good one. And he can come in and just charges a zillion dollars an hour, and then you make it back because of his expert design. Well, that's true through the whole—both hotels.

Elevators. You have your own ideas, which I believe in plenty of elevators and fast elevators. I [chuckling] remember one that was when we built the hotel here in Reno. Bob Martin, who's an excellent man—he's kind of our construction guy and our planning in that way. He's in on the ground floor of all that, and he knows the value of a dollar. I remember we got into a thing on elevators. We could, I think, go from the first floor to the twenty-fourth floor in say, twenty-two seconds or something. And that cost so much, and then to do it in fifteen seconds (or whatever—I'm not sure of the time, but maybe thirty or forty percent less) cost another two hundred and fifty or three hundred thousand dollars. And I remember, they brought it up at a meeting. And sometimes when they don't really agree with my thinking, they'll maybe try to slip it through (which maybe that's an unfair statement). So they brought up, twenty-two seconds was so much and sixteen seconds was two hundred and fifty more. "What would you like, Bill?"

And I said, "Fifteen seconds!" Just—you know.

"Well, do you want to talk about it?"

I said, "No! Can you make it twelve seconds [laughing]—?" And there is a limit, which I learned, too. I said, "Well that's—" (and I averaged it out) "that's so much a floor." And I said, "Well, doggone it! That Hilton in New York—I've stayed there, and that's sixty floors, and I know I was on the fifty-fourth floor, and it took me a minute and twelve seconds to get up there, so that was an average of so many seconds per floor."

And they said, "Yes." And then they had a good answer. They had to get their experts in. And you have to start and stop, so it's like a car. You can go from here, ten miles, and in the meantime get up to a hundred miles an hour and slow down. But if you're only going three blocks, you can't get up to a hundred and stop too well.

Whether it's a kitchen or a elevator or a hotel, I'm a great believer (and I believe the organization is now) in getting the experts in, and be sure you get good ones, and payin' them what they want, and let them help you and adapt to it. It's so true, no matter what you get into, somebody's already been there before you and have studied the problems, and someone usually's come up with a real good answer. And if you can find out what that answer is by payin' something, why, you save time and money and effort and frustration and a whole bunch of things.

I think all of our planning and building has gone that way, with our own ideas of extra amenities, like at the Lake—which is a phobia of mine, and is well appreciated. Of course, it adds to the expense, but it is a public pleaser without any question—especially the ladies. And it's a big time saver and a big frustration saver, and sometimes I'll say that it's maybe good marital relations—'cause anyone that's traveled, and one bathroom, and the man and the wife and the so-and-so, and you're short of time, and it can cause a little disagreement occasionally. And when you have your own, why, you're on your own. It's just so simple. My wife and I travel now; we can afford it, but we always have two bathrooms. And occasionally we'll even have to rent another suite next door just to get that extra bathroom, and they'll look at us like we're crazy. But we'll take it, and we'll pay for it because that's how we like to live, and we're very happy; it works pretty good.

It must be very rare to have this much planning go into any kind of an establishment; the planning for the casinos and the showrooms has been as careful as the planning for the hotel.

Yeah. Well, we have a big advantage there, which we might not have done it if we'd gone the other way, if we'd started from scratch with a hotel and casino and the whole thing. And of course, there would have been a money crunch to get it put up. And you have to get open, and your time, and everything's going out, nothing's coming in; and so you want this and that—well, it's going to take longer and cost more, and you will be tempted to cut corners.

Where we had the casino going, we had money coming in every day. And we're building the hotel; we didn't have to open the hotel any certain date, so we could just do it at our leisure and do it the way we wanted. So it's much, much easier when you have the income, against when you're starting from scratch. And I really sympathize with these people, and I've seen the hotels around town here when they go, and they're goin' along and this and that, and being held up here and there. Well, like the Onslow is a good example, and I know those fellas, here and there, and I really sympathize with them. It's going out, and they're held up here, and there's plasterers and so on, and everything going out, nothing coming in. And you finally get it open, it's a happy day.

How about the planning of the casino in the new part? Did you spend as much time on every square foot of space there?

Yes, the company did; I didn't. But Rome Andreotti and his casino people—yes. Every square inch of a casino is very, very important. And should the slot machine be there, should

it be here, and should the Keno game be there, and should it be so far from the wall?—and oh, yeah, that's laid out. And there's a certain way of laying out games—at least our way of doing it, so many “21s” and, then the Craps and so on, which we've evolved over the years. But that's really Rome's department. But I'm quite happy with it. And when I go other places, sometimes I'm puzzled how they do have their— it looks sometimes like they just brought 'em in and set 'em there and started out. And there's a traffic flow, you know, and where it's thin, you want to have something back there to maybe bring 'em there, and so on.

Mr. Andreotti's care with this is a reflection of the kind of thing that you've demanded?

Oh, yeah. But that's his specialty. 'course, Rome—we have an inside joke in the company, and it's pretty true. Well, the joke is that, don't leave that chair unobserved or Rome'll take at out and put in a slot machine. But at one time here in Reno, we had so many games and slot machines there was just—wasn't any space even for the people hardly. And you do have to—where they can meet, and you're meeting friends for dinner, you should have a place to—and it was like this [hands close together]! I think that was during Shep's administration, and he listened to Rome, which Rome was really strong then (I mean Rome's strong anytime). But I think Shep, because of his lack of knowledge with it, just gave in a hundred percent to Rome. And then when Lloyd got in, I think the first two weeks, or the first month or something like that, we took out a hundred slot machines and just made it a much pleasanter place 'cause it was just like this [shoulders hunched, hands close], you know. It was almost like a slot arcade, there was just—. And you like slots,

you like “21”—I mean the customers—but then you like a snack bar and you like a bar and you like a—. And now at the Lake we have quite an arcade up there—shopping, which is real nice. We always wanted that, and never had room. It's such a relief up there (I think I mentioned that earlier); to walk away from the showroom and walk down—here's some beautiful shops, and it's very pleasant.

VIEW FROM THE EXECUTIVE SUITE

Oh, we were talkin' a while ago about Noah Dietrich. And when I went to Hollywood High School, his two daughters, Elizabeth and Kay, went there. We were school chums. I went with Kay, and I went with Elizabeth of f and on. And we were good friends. And Mr. Dietrich was such a wonderful man. He was extremely friendly and generous, and I remember that was Depression, 1932 and '33. And he had a lot of money; he was working for Hughes then, and he had a big salary for the times. He always had a new car, and they had a nice home, and I remember two things that impressed me. He was always very nice, like we went to San Francisco, and we went here and there. And one thing, the Coconut Grove was the nightclub at the Ambassador Hotel down there; that was the place to go. And they had a special rate on Friday night for college kids, so we'd go and for five dollars—it was Prohibition days, but you could go in, and I think it was a dollar and a half cover charge, and you ordered a bottle of ginger ale or somethin'. I remember for five dollars you could get out of there, and you took your own liquor. But what impressed me about Mr. Dietrich was several times—once, I'm sure twice—New Year's Eve we'd go to the Coconut Grove, and have dinner and everything. So the check, I remember, was several hundred dollars, which I just couldn't believe at the time.

Then one time we went on the Hughes yacht. Oh, that was— the *Hilda*, and it was a hundred and eighty feet long. And it was a wonderful yacht. And it had full complement of crew; I think there were thirty in the crew all dressed in their white linens, and the captain and the chef and the—all the titles that there are on a ship. And there was just Mr. and Mrs. Dietrich and the two girls, and I was there and another fella—one of the other girl's boyfriends. There're some pictures of us somewhere.

The yacht was in San Diego. So we went to San Diego, and we got on it and we went to Catalina, stayed a couple of days, and then we went back to Long Beach or San Pedro, where they kept it down there. That was really thrilling to—really livin'. And it went into the harbor—it was so big it couldn't get in the harbor at Catalina, at Avalon, so it was out in the bay, really. The little boats had come around, and they'd look to see [hand shading eyes], you know. It was my first feeling of "celebrityness" (whatever it is). I was six-foot-three and I weighed about a hundred and fifty-five pounds, I think—very tall and skinny, and was just another guy. But I remember we went into shore, and of course, the little boat from the *Hilda* that took us ashore was thirty feet long and was a beautiful thing.

So the whole pier is just loaded with people to see the big people comin' off the boat. And I'm just a kid, you know, and I'm goin' along. So they're standin' as you got up the gangplank, and there was a crowd, and you had to kinda squeeze through just a narrow passageway, just hundreds of people. So Mr. and Mrs. Dietrich were first, of course, and the girls and all, and I come taggin' up the rear, and I'm just goin' along. And I remember I came along, and they were lookin', lookin', lookin'. And they saw me, and they spotted

me, said, "There he is! There he is!" And come to find out, of course, they were lookin' for Hughes 'cause it was Hughes's yacht, and he's six-foot-whatever and, you know, dark hair and all, so I guess I did look a little like him.

So I went, "Oh Golly," you know, "that's terrible!" And then I thought, "Well, maybe it isn't." So I put my head up [swaggers] [laughter], slowed my pace down a little, and strolled up, you know, and looked the town over kind of disdainfully. (I'm exaggerating, but not very much.)

But he's [Dietrich], you know, is still goin'; he's ninety years old. And he called me, and I called him back, and he was talkin' about that suit he's in on down there, and he said if they won it, why, would we be interested in some hotels, and I told him, "Of course," but—. He's Comin' up, he said in a few weeks; I'll get together with him. He's just a nice man; all his life he was a nice man, just—he deserves everything he's got.

On the other Hughes thing—I didn't discuss that with Maheu and all that? Yeah, Robert Maheu. He called me—I forget how we got together. That's when Hughes was buyin' everything, and Maheu wanted to see me; I said, "Okay." At the time I think I owned all of Harrah's; there was no outside stock. So the board of directors didn't meet with him or anything, just he and I. And we talked, and they were interested in buying. Maheu was very interesting; he was a very sharp guy.

And, "Do you wanna sell?"

And I told him, "No," and, "but," I said, "anything's for sale, but," I said, "I don't want to sell. I'm happy with what I'm doin', and I've got a good business, and—" But I said, "I don't believe in saying something isn't for sale." I said, "If you want to pay me double what it's worth, I'll consider it, but it's no bargains around here." And they got an awful lot of bargains in Vegas because they were owned by

some off-color people down there, and I think the state put a little pressure on 'em possibly, and they kinda had worn out their welcome anyway, but they made some wonderful buys down there, very—half—fifty cents on the dollar.

So then they were—Hughes was—interested up here, but it didn't work out. They didn't really want to pay anything. But we made offers, or they made an offer, or I quoted 'em a price. They tried to knock it down, and I said, "No."

But it was so much fun with Maheu, and it was always—he'd come out to my house at two in the morning a lot, and he would pretend to call Hughes, which I really think he was, and he'd say, "Well, Harrah says this," you know, "Harrah says that," and so on, so on. Then he'd get an answer back, and uh—so—. I really think he was talkin' to Hughes. But, as I said, it didn't work out, which is fine; I mean I didn't really want to sell anything. It was fun, while it went on, 'cause then you didn't know much about him, you know. And now it's all come out; I guess he was pretty sick these last few years, but—. He really liked to buy things for nothin', I'll say that [chuckling], which nothin' wrong with that; I like to do that, too.

But you never met Hughes personally?

No. What was so funny, when Dietrich was there—and Hughes was a young playboy then, you know. And he had several Duesenbergs and a Doble Steamer; he had a lot of neat cars. And I wasn't anxious to meet him; he was a celebrity in those days. But the funny thing—I would pop over to these girls' house, and when you're goin', you know, you're a friend of the family, you don't call, you just go over, you know. Or I'd take one of 'em home, or I'd be pickin' one up or somethin' and we'd play tennis (we did all sorts of things),

horseback—. So I was in and out of there, you know, six times a week, somethin' like that. And I would go, and I wanted to meet Hughes, you know; I didn't say, "I want to meet Hughes," but I really wanted to 'cause he was a big shot, and he had these neat cars.

I'd get there, and they'd say, "Bill! Mr. Hughes just left five minutes ago," which can happen. And it happened again he just left, then, "Oh, he's comin' over. He's heard about you, heard you're a car nut; he wants to talk to ya."

And, "Fine."

"Can you wait around?" And so we'd wait, and of course, Hughes was his own boss, so at three o'clock he's supposed to be there, he'd get there at three or he'd get there at four, he'd get there at six, whatever he felt like. And, you know, usually I had a job or somethin', so I'd hang around an hour, maybe, waitin' to meet him, and I'd have to go. And then the next day, they'd say, "Right after you left, here he came," but I must have missed him five or six times just by five minutes. Maybe it was meant to be that way, I don't know. It was fun; it was exciting.

What kind of competitors are they next door?—the Hughes corporation?

Oh, Harolds isn't much competition—hasn't been for years, really. It's just another place; it isn't run very good, and they don't run it any better. It's been kind of a bum place for—you know, it's not crooked or anything, but just another place now. It used to be "Wow! Harolds Club!" you know, but now they're just another place, really. I guess some old-time people that come to town want to see Harolds Club, but I don't think they amount to much any more. We count 'em, and like we have at least three times as many players at one time as Harolds Club now.

What kind of competitors do they make statewide?

Oh, they're not very good, as operators, in my opinion. Up at the Lake they're just, uh—they don't treat their help like we do, and they don't treat their customers like we do. And they operate more like Vegas, you know—push the people in, crowd 'em in. They have some real bad shows up there. By that I mean not necessarily dirty, but maybe real noisy and late starting and things like that—you know, just kind of a sloppy operation. And they're that way in Vegas, which most people are, most operators. But generally the operators in northern Nevada are far superior to the operators in southern Nevada. Southern Nevada is just take the money and run, you know. Not so much crooked; I don't think there's much crookedness any more—just, the heck with the people, you know.

MGM has imported a little of that. Of course, they opened too early, but from what we've seen, they have that philosophy of just get the people in, get their money, get 'em out, get some more people. Not repeat business, just bring in another bus load, another plane load and, you know, get their money and get 'em out, and another, another, which is kind of the Vegas philosophy. There are some places in Vegas that go for repeat business, but most of 'em are just conventions and, you know, a bunch of tourists, and give 'em what you gotta give 'em and get 'em out.

We hear that just all the time, from many of our customers (this is over ten, fifteen years, well, twenty years we've had the South Shore Room) —you know, and we've gone out of our way to treat 'em nice. And they enjoy it, and they come up quite often, and then after several years they'll go to Vegas, you know. And they'll come back just horrified that their reservation wasn't honored the way it

should be, and they got a terrible table, and the waiter was rude, and the room was noisy, and the food was lousy, and the star maybe was very, very dirty; and they just—shocked that they're those kind of places. And you know, not all places are bad in Vegas; there are some not too bad. But there's a philosophy that—well, it's not only Vegas; it's, oh, worldwide, I guess. And some countries are better than others, and some cities, like New York is just terrible; it's about the worst there is—courtesy. And like London, there's a lot of courtesy in London, and not so good in Paris; Italy's pretty good. People knock Italy, but I have good luck in Rome. So there's a national philosophy, and then a city philosophy, like New York is just as I said—terrible. The smaller cities [are] much friendlier, you know. We went cross-country in '76 in our cars, and we stopped in all these little towns, you know, and it was just the way it used to be, you know—backbone of America. And you'd walk in, "Oh, hello! Hi, how are ya?" you know, "How ya doin'?" and, you know, "Whatcha gonna have?" and just, you know, friendly. And not acting, just, glad to see ya. A lot of people like that.

So maybe that's part of Vegas's problem, is they're so big. I don't know. I'm not gonna worry about it [chuckles].

Where do we go from there?

You had a rather sophisticated business organization before you went public. Would you like to describe how that came into being, and then give some descriptions, character sketches of some of the managers through those years?

Yeah, we grew just as businesses that start with six employees that get to thousands, grow; they just get more, and you get the place next door and all that sort of thing. But the management end of it—we didn't grow that

way; we still tried to operate the old way, and we knew we were spinnin' our wheels. It was real bad. It was Bob Ring and I were runnin' it, and of course, Rome Andreotti was here then, and so on. But Bob and I were the guys. And we knew we weren't doin' it right. And I think I read about the George May Company that—they were called "business engineers," and I think I read about 'em in Time magazine or something, and that they could come in and look at your business and tell ya, you know, Gee, you're doin' it that way; it should be this way, and so on.

So we got in touch with them, and, they came in, and they really turned us around. I mean just—we were doin' so many things it's unbelievable, just like a bunch of little kids, you know. It's just what it evolved, just hit and miss, you know. And our chain of command and our management chart and all that was just—we were just terrible. It was amazing how well we were doing with our organizational setup. And I was handling many details I shouldn't've been handling; Bob was, you know—that should've been five levels below us; but we'd always done it, so we were still doing it. So we were working ten, twelve hours a day and just workin' as hard as we could and still the things were piling up, you know. "What's wrong here?" You know, somethin' wrong.

So they were excellent, except as those engineering firms are (all I've ever run into)—except this was a real gyppo outfit or something, in that they wouldn't get out; that was their policy. And they'd come in, and they'd say, "Well, this survey's gonna take maybe six or eight weeks or four weeks, six weeks." And it was so much a week—it was expensive—like a thousand dollars or five hundred dollars or well, maybe a thousand, or maybe more. But then their six weeks went by and nothin' happened, and, "Oh, now we're

into this. Gee, we gotta study this on the food department," or the so-and-so department.

And so bein' polite, and it's new to Bob and I—"Okay, tine."

So I think they went along at least twenty weeks. And instead of five thousand dollars it was thirty thousand dollars. And they're still—and there's more and more of 'em all the time, and the bill went up and up, and—. And actually their policy was just to come in and keep things—and there were plenty of things to find, no question about that. But they'd still be here if we hadn't kicked 'em out. It was their policy, and so finally it was—I hate to do that (or I don't any more; I'm tougher now), but then I hated to be impolite. Finally I went (yelling), "Goddammit Get outa here, you guys! Give me a bill and get out! Go down! Get in the elevator, wherever; get out!" And I just—it's the only way they would move, and so it was good and bad. And they did us a lot of good, but they left a bad taste.

So a few years went by and we wouldn't even have anything to do with those. And then I read another article, where there were some very good ones. McKenzie in New York—. So I tried to get them, and they were kinda snooty then. We've since used them several times. We were a gambling casino, and they'd never handled a gambling casino, and they were kinda—. So they didn't do us, but we got some other outfits, and I can't remember their names. Then periodically, maybe every couple of years, we'd get 'em in for a few—and we'd lay it out at first—it's so many weeks, so much money—and we had good success. And some were better in one field than the others, so we must've had four or five or six or eight of 'em. And we still use 'em, various kinds. And they were fine.

We've learned to every two, three, four years to come in and take a look. And gee, this was good four years ago, but now we're

so much larger and this and that, and the fellow that handled that department was no longer here and so on. But anyway, they're super, and that's why we are as efficient as we are; we get credit for being very efficient and our accounting system and all that, which, of course, is our doing, but the incentive came from these concerns, these business specialists, I guess you'd call 'em. They're just super. I recommend them to a person with twenty employees. Just things, you know—you do it this way and you do it—well, that isn't the way you should do it. And then when they show ya, you think, "Oh!" [snaps fingers], you know [chuckling], "course, that's the way you should do it. This is dumb." So they're just wonderful.

Primarily, we have our procedures, and then the rest of it has just been as business opportunities arise, why I'm very proud of jumpin' into 'em. Like when we went to the Lake, why, that deal was made in a week, I think. And we've made other deals. I've always thought, you know, expansion-wise, and I'm always puzzled (I really am today, too) at people, like they'll work for years and they save some money, and then they get into a cleaning business or a restaurant business or a car business, whatever. And they work real hard, and they have a partner or they don't have a partner. And most businesses fail, but some are successful. So they're successful, and they're doin' fine. They're makin' money, so they get their bills paid, and they're still makin' money, and they get a nice house to live in and nice car to drive and so on—you know, they do that, but then that's it. And they still run their hamburger stand, or they're still—and they go play golf, and they work hard, but they run it (when they get the wrinkles out of their belly, as they say) like they were workin' for somebody else. Well, example I'll give you is—can't remember his name—nice guy,

too—president of the chamber of commerce, a good citizen. You probably know him. He owned the Jeep agency before we got it, and his father started it. Remember they are on West Fourth Street there?

And he built the new facility out here that we have now. And I thought, "Wow! Look at that! Isn't that wonderful?" But I kept in touch; I drove Jeeps and all, and they had this little lousy facility on West Fourth there. It was way too little, and it wasn't right, and they closed on Sunday, which was dumb, and he was never there on Saturday or Sunday; he went hunting, and just—whoever was runnin' the place. And it was just terrible, and I couldn't believe it.

So then they went out here and built the new one; I thought, "Oh, hooray!" 'cause I kinda liked the guy. "Hooray, he's gettin' his—" you know, "he's gonna start workin'," 'cause his father—and his father died or got out of it, and he was the heir apparent. He wasn't runnin' it good, but he built a beautiful thing out there.

Well then we learned it was for sale, and I couldn't believe it. So we got in and we bought it. And come to find out that the Jeep people had insisted that he do it—he had this lousy facility, and Reno growin'—and said, "If you're gonna keep the line, you gotta build a better agency," which car companies will do, and quite properly.

And so he'd been forced to build it against his will, and then he had to work—he got in it; it was very expensive. So to come out on it, hell's] gonna have to work seven days a week, and he didn't want to work seven days; he wanted [to] just work three or four days and go fishin' and huntin'. And I just can't believe it—. And we got it at a very bargain price, just 'cause he was strung out and lazy, is the word. I'm always amazed at that, and there's a lot of people do that. Well, a lot of people are lazy,

plus they don't have vision— of course, there's no reason. If you do have a real nice clothing store and you're doin' fine and your family's happy, why, who am I to say you should have twelve of 'em, but I don't think that way. I'm always interested in who's next door [laughs] and who owns the property! We've done that—I don't know if you've heard about it, or I've probably told you about Ketchum and Stanley, Idaho, and same thing. And we buy this place, and then we look at the guy next door.

And more often than you think, things kinda fall into place, and it's not all luck either. It's just lookin', and usually there's—not usually—quite often or many times, there'll be a little Achilles heel there somewhere. The place looks pretty good, but the partners are fighting, or the husband and wife are fighting, or maybe they're overextended, or maybe there's a health problem, or—you know, there's a lot of opportunity if you really look. We've just done super in Ketchum, and we're—haven't any money yet, but we're sure gettin' the right spots. We have a whole block there now. And we just started with one little store, and just click, click, click. And, of course, Bob Hudgens handles that, and we have fun doin' it. It's almost like playin' Monopoly. It's what we did here in Reno, only it's much tinier scale there because there's no casinos.

So getting back to a business philosophy—that's what it is. And of course, people say, "Well, how do you do all this?" And really the bigger you are, it's so much easier. There's a department—advertising, Mark Curtis; and the employees, Rome Andreotti; and future building, Bob Martin, and—. In the old days, why, gee whiz, you know, employees, that's me; and building, that's me; and licensing, that's me; and the number of crew that come to work, that's me and Bob. You know, you had to do so much yourself, and you really

weren't capable at much of it. But now Mark's an expert on advertising, and Bob Martin's an expert on planning and hiring the contractors and all that, so it's a department. I just say [gesture, handing over], "Hey," which is one thing about being successful, and many people can't do that, is delegation, and I've always been real good at that. I'm proud of that— is delegate. And there's a saying on that that's very fitting; I think it's "Organize, deputize, and supervise." But the "supervise" isn't exactly right; there's a better word for that. "Organize and deputize"—let 'em run it. But keep a little—. Like we have our daily report; that's how we keep in touch. Don't just give to them and then come back a year later and discover that it's this, that, and the other; you have to kinda—like a child—look over their shoulder just to be sure. But don't lead their hand or anything; let 'em do it. The more they do, the better, and it's better for them, they're happier, and they're stronger. But still you just can't—until a person's been forever, and then—well, even so, like Rome, he has his strong points and he has his weak points, and which we all know—he knows it, too. He'll get a little this and that, and on some things, and you say, "Hey, Rome, get off of that!" you know, "Get on the big picture."

[Chuckles] Rome is a workaholic. Rome's desk looks like this [heaped up]—don't ever pass anything on it you can do it yourself, is his philosophy! And [laughing] we work on him and work on him! He has plenty of people under him, you know, but he just—that's the way he is. I don't do that any more; that's Lloyd's job. But he really has to get on Rome once or twice a year. I mean Rome really works extremely hard, and he's very, sensitive, so you can't—"Goddammit, Rome! Quit—" You gotta say, "Now, Rome, don't you—?" 'cause he'll get real—"Oh, everybody's mad at me." He is a wonderful guy.

Rome Andreotti worked next door at the Frontier Club (that was Pick and Joe Hobson's place) as a check racker and then a wheel dealer, and he was a super wheel dealer. And we got acquainted, and he came over in '48. I don't remember who hired him—might've been [Warren Nelson].

Yeah, I think Warren might've hired Rome. But Rome didn't really—no education, but he was just a super wheel dealer and got along fine with the public, and was very interested in all the games, and is today. I guess he's our foremost gaming authority. [If] somebody wants to talk about the odds on the Roulette wheel or the Crap game or "21," why, we'll call Rome. Your card counters, all that sort of thing—that's Rome Andreotti's department. And he knows all the answers—everything but slots, and that's Bud Garaventa. So it's so easy. And then Rome and Bud work together on the number of machines and so on.

But it's really very easy nowadays. But, 'course, we have good locations (that's very important), and then we're very competitive minded. Like MGM came to town, that was a whole new ball game. Every competitor changes things; that's the big change in Reno, of course, and we didn't know what to expect. Well, we kind of had ideas what would happen, but—. We check them like we do; you know, up at the Lake we know how many "21" players Harvey has at ten in the morning, and down here we know how many players MGM has at ten in the morning.

It's very important; it's important to know how your competitors are doing. And you know how you're doing, what's the difference, you know? And then occasionally, "Oh-ho! They're gettin' a lot of '21' play, and ours is down a little. What's goin'—what's wrong here?" you know. "Find out real fast." And then you can find out. And it's usually either—well, they're doin' somethin' the players like or—.

It's one thing that Harolds Club had that was very, very good, and we never did it, and I don't think we ever would. But I the old days of the Smith family, they were very lenient, and they didn't have all the controls we have, and they lost a lot of money. But they had a lot of people in there; it was the place to go, and it was just full of people. Pappy Smith, he said things, but one thing he said, he said, "Yeah, we don't really watch—have all the lookouts and have all the people, you know." He said, "We have to win the money twice," which meant they're beat, and then they'd get cheated, and the employees'd steal, and the players'd steal, but still the volume was so huge—and a lot of people were gettin' the best of it, and like some of the games—not necessarily cheating, but the dealer'd make a mistake, and there was nobody to correct it, so they'd, you know, get a little extra. And of course, they'd lose it in the long run, which he meant by having to win it twice. And at that time it was very successful. But that wasn't our kind of an operation; it was just sloppy. It was very successful, but it was sloppy. And, we prefer a little tidier thing, and (you know) you win the bet, you get paid, and you lose the bet, we get it, and that sort of thing. And you can get a big volume; we have a big volume.

But Pappy and Harold had some good—Harold gets criticized a lot, but he wasn't too bad. Pappy was the overall brains of the thing, but Harold was real good, and down on the floor and sayin' hello to people and shakin' hands and buyin' drinks, you know—in his day, before he got goofy. But he was a good operator.

'course, Raymond I., he was kinda fun. I told you about him, I think? Yeah. He was a real weirdo, really—so many ways. Didn't take him long to get goin' on somethin'. And I'm that way, too, like—it looks like a good idea, let's get goin'! Let's call somebody today and

start diggin' the hole tomorrow, and that sort of thing, you know—which I really can't do any more, and it's really not too good, but—. But he did a lot of that, and many cases it didn't work very good, but many cases it did. He didn't believe in holdin' back too much.

'course, you couldn't—he had his own thinking, and I never argued with him or anything. He was a lot bigger guy than I was, and I went along with him always, but I sure didn't agree with a lot of his philosophy.

Tell me about some of the other people that you had in the organization before it went public, before '71—what they were doing and what they were contributing to the organization.

Then how much did I cover on Bob Ring? Well, Bob Ring was president, I believe after—I was president for quite a while; then I believe Bob Ring was president. And Bob Ring did. a tine job, but he'd been with me so long he was really my alter ego. So Bob was just a carbon copy of me, which I liked and he liked. But the policies were exactly the same, and the follow-through—everything was almost identical—Bob Ring or me. Bob was president for a short time, but I'm glad he was president; he deserved it.

And Gene Diullo (I'm not sure I'm sayin' it right) was a Keno man, came with us when we opened. I think he might've left us for a short time. Opened a bar over on Sierra. In the old—what's the old hotel over there?

Canton, in the Canton Hotel. I believe they had a bar in there. He and some other people took Jackson over there, which irritated me a little bit. But they were kind of a phony bunch, which Gene caught onto right away, and came right back. He was only over there a week or so. He's been with us ever since, an excellent Keno man.

As the company's grown, why, he's grown right along with Keno. Where we used to have one, why, we now have gosh knows how many Keno games.

Okay. Well, there was Red Farnsworth. He was quite a guy. He was the only—see, Bob Ring and. I are about the same age, and Rome's a little younger. But Red Farnsworth was ten or fifteen years older than any of us. I think he came out of New York, and I forget how we got ahold of him. But he was extremely hard worker, and he had no education, but he understood people. And I think he'd been a carnival man or something. But he was really our first industrial relations, only we didn't even call it that, then. But any labor problems we had, Red handled 'em. And he was kinda hit or miss, but he was such a hard worker—and he was pretty smart—that he'd just work 'em out. He got—which was very important—he got the confidence of the employees. I think he had the Joe Average employee—I think they had more confidence in Red than me or Bob Ring or anybody. They would just—he was the guy. So you have a problem in some department, and Red Farnsworth'd walk in, and it would just—just his walking in would—'cause everyone knew he was very fair. And if you're an employee and you'd been pushed around a little by a supervisor or somethin' (which can happen; that was before we had the board of review), Red would find out about it, and boy, he'd stand up for you against anybody. And if you were wrong, why he'd do that—and he was very thorough. He wasn't superficial. He'd go in and really get to the bottom; that's a failing I have and lots of people do. But you go in, and here's this, so and so happened, and such and such. Okay, so and so happened, such and such—this the way it is. Well, maybe it did, maybe it didn't. And he would dig in

and dig in, and if it was true, that's the way it was; and if it wasn't true, he would follow it up.

And then he also—another good point he had was he wasn't afraid to act. He wasn't always doin' where you thought, "Oh, Goddamn, look what Red did again!" But if there was a problem—he's up at the Lake and there was a problem, and he figured it out; then he would act. And he'd fire somebody, or he'd do somethin' and—you know, instead of say[ing], "Oh, hey, we got a problem here," you know. And then so many people'll do that, and say, "Well, so and—well, he should be fired."

Then you say, "Okay, fire him."

Then they say, "Oh, Bill told me to fire you," you know, that sort of thing, where they—they're chicken.

Okay, Red and Bud Garaventa I mentioned, and Rome, and (who else), Bob Martin.

Yeah, he started with us. He was goin' to the University; he was a football player from somewhere. I think that's when we had the football drive. Remember when they recruited a little bit here and there? And he came out of somewhere and went to the University, and he looked like a football player—kind of a dumbbell, which he really isn't, but he looked it, you know, and kind of zero personality, which isn't much better now, but—no, that isn't fair; he's okay.

But I remember he worked, and we were building the casino, our first casino, and he's goin' to school; and he was a night watchman because he needed some money. We didn't want somebody to come in—they worked days, you know, and the place was open; we didn't want any wise guys comin' and wreckin' it. So we had Bob as a night watchman. And then we got open, and he, bein' a husky guy, became a bouncer. He's been with us ever since. See, that opened in '46, '66—twenty some years. And

he continued working; he continued with the University, but he continued working. He's been with us ever since, and he's done many things and finally got into construction. And I don't know what his title is. Should I get an organizational chart?

Okay. Well, let me start at the top. There's me and Bob Hudgens, who you know is my assistant. And Bob Ring is the vice chairman; I'm the chairman. And Bob's [Ring] duties aren't too much any more. He handles our golf tournaments and so on. And Lloyd Dyer's the president, which I'll get into him later.

And then reporting to him is George Drews, who's an executive vice president of finance and administration. And he's only been with us a few years. And he went to school in the East; I think he was raised in the East. We looked for someone on finances and so on; we were very weak in that department. There was nothin'—we did bring people up through the ranks, but we didn't have anybody in the ranks that had that, so we brought him in. And he's been fine; he knows the money markets and the banks and interest rate and all that sort of thing.

And Holmes Hendricksen is our executive vice president of entertainment. He started with us at Lake Tahoe years ago as just summer help. And he was going to the university in Utah, I think the University of Utah. And his fraternity's the same as mine, Phi Delta Theta. And we've always gotten along; he's a very capable fella. And he was here and there, and we had various entertainment directors and problems with 'em, and— not major, but they were problems. And we felt that an entertainment director had to be an ex-show-business personality, which wasn't true. And then when Sheppard (who I'll get into later) — when he was president, one excellent thing he did was make Holmes Hendricksen director of entertainment. And when he proposed it, I

said, "Well, gee, Holmes don't know any more about entertainment than you do, and I don't know much except what I've—experience has brought out. Holmes—" you know.

And he said, "But Holmes is good at anything," which he was. So we put him in there, and he's by far the best entertainment director in the business. And, you know, you don't have to be able to play a piano or anything to be that—important thing is to hire the stars that bring in the customers and to keep the stars happy, so they come back and still at an amount of money we can afford.

A good example of that or an excellent example of that is Frank Sinatra, who is a tremendous draw. And he's temperamental; if things aren't exactly right, why, you've got problems. And of course, we really try to keep things right, but sometimes just something unforeseen, not our fault, will come up. And Holmes—'course Holmes being a bachelor doesn't hurt any because his time's entirely his, you know. Well, like Frank took a bunch of people to Europe—to Israel to dedicate a hospital there that he built for several million dollars. And when they dedicated it and Frank—and Verna and I were invited, but we were in Australia—but they chartered a Lockheed 1011 or whatever it is, and three hundred people all went to Israel, and dedicated this thing. And Holmes was right in the middle of that and just did a super job on the thing. So he's fine.

And then under Holmes is Mark Curtis, who I mentioned earlier, and then a Doug Bushousen, who does the entertainment end that Holmes does. Between the two of 'em they make a great pair.

Then another one on a direct line from Lloyd, the president, is Charles Franklin, who's our general counsel and secretary. And for years we had a lawyer or attorney

firm, and it went way back with—which I'll go into that some, a little later. But we had Mead Dixon for many years and his firm, and then another thing Shep suggested was an in-house lawyer. And at first it surprised me because we—Mead called me, called him at his office, so and so. But when you get pretty good size, there're so many legal things that are just every day, just hundreds a day; it's hard to believe. And so many of 'em are so unimportant, just anybody can do it. And so Charles is just wonderful at that and kept the ton of paperwork away from goin' down the street to Mead's office; it's just done right here. So that was a wonderful thing, and he's—I was a little surprised—he's very capable, and he's still in his thirties, I think, when he came with us. And I thought, "Well, gee that's strange—a guy in his thirties would want to go, and he's on salary here. If I was a lawyer, I'd want my own firm, and oh boy," you know. But of course there's two ways of lookin' at everything. And he's real happy here, and of course he's paid well. And he doesn't really have to worry about clients; he has one, and that's us. In fact his department's grown; he now has an assistant. We have two in-house lawyers, plus Mead's firm. I don't know how many people Mead has, but he must have—oh, he has several other top—besides the secretaries—three or four lawyers there. And I'd say fifty percent of their practice is Harrah's.

Mark Curtis is under Holmes and Doug—. Then under Rome, who I mentioned earlier—he's operations, which is the important thing. And he has Mert Smith in Reno and—well, go into that. Mert's been with us many years. I'm kinda happy I picked him. We had another manager, didn't work out, and Mert was—I forget what he was doing. But what he did he did real good. And so they asked, "Who should we send—?"

And I—"How about Mert?" And we tried him, and he's been [at] that job for ten years.

And Bud Garaventa's under Mert. He's our slot guy I mentioned earlier, but he's also gaming; we promoted him, got him out of the slots. He has a large department to handle the slots, which he supervises, but also in the "21" games and the Roulette wheels—he's in charge of that, too.

Then there's a Bob Contois, who's been with us many years, is assistant general manager under Mert. And Jim Calhoun, who's also an assistant general manager—. When you have a twenty-four-hour business, you really need a general manager and assistant, plus your shift bosses; so it's a very good setup.

Then on our industrial relations, which is under Rome—that is Joe Specht, who's just excellent. Joe's been with us I guess fifteen years; he doesn't look that old. But we, as you know, have no unions except our musicians. It wasn't always that way. We had to have waitresses and so on; we had an election and got decertified, and Joe did that; I'm kinda proud of that. I know how pleased Joe was when we were workin' on the election (I don't know if we've won it yet), but he never bothers me at all; he always goes through channels. But he wanted to see me—surprised me, kinda scared me; I thought he was gonna quit or something. And so he came in—I always see anybody like that wants to see me, try to get a lead first to what it's about. But he came in and he said, "I just wanted to tell you how happy I am to work here because it's—most employers would, 'Oh, so what? Why bother with that? So the union guys are around a little bit—so what? Forget it,' you know." He said, "You really stuck your neck out." And we were picketed for a while, and some of our friends wouldn't come in. It was some work, but it was our principle, and we believed in it and it worked out.

And Joe Fanelli's vice president of food and beverage. And for years we had a terrible time with our food, and we'd try this food—we knew nothing about it. And we'd try this fella, and he really wasn't any good, and a lot of 'em are phony, and we just changed, changed, changed. All departments, we'd have a fella there fifteen years and twenty years and twelve years; get to "food," and he'd been there six months, and here'd come another one and another one and another one, and they were either incapable—of course, there was a shortage of good food managers. But they really are incapable, or else someone'd come and steal 'em. And we'd pay; you know, we kept raisin' the money, raisin' the money, and had a terrible time.

And, I go to the Mayo Clinic every year for a checkup; all the people do now here, all top management. That's in Rochester, Minnesota, and right next to it is the Kahler Hotel. And they've both been there so long, and they're friendly (although they're not owned by the same—). But there is a tunnel from the hotel to the clinic, and of course, the winters are very severe back there. But you go back and you check into the Kahler Hotel, and there's one other hotel they own, also connects; but the Kahler's the one. So you have a nice room, and they have restaurants there and the bars and newsstand, everything you want in a hotel.

And then you go down in the lower level, and there's a tunnel to the clinic. And it's very handy, and it's the way you do it. And you're and you have an eight o'clock appointment; it takes about five minutes. And like we always have the same suite now; it's on the eleventh floor of the Kahler. So we go up—sssss down to the lower level and then walk through the tunnel and into the lower level of the Mayo building. And so my appointment's on the

sixteenth floor, and I take the elevator and go up to the sixteenth floor and go in there, and here I am, and just ta-ta-ta-ta. So it can be twenty-five below zero, and it's no problem, so it's just wonderful.

The Kahler, they have a coffee shop. And that's just the one hotel; there's another hotel, too, which I'm just talkin' about the Kahler. And they have a coffee shop, and they have a restaurant on top; they've changed the name several times, so it's uh, something-room [Pinnacle]. It's pretty nice. And then on the main floor again, coffee shop, and then there's the Elizabethan Room; that's a nice dining room. And then they have another room that's kind of a combination bar and buffet. And they have another room; it's kind of a very light lunch sort of a thing. There's a tunnel to all this; they're all connected.

But anyway, plus the room service, it was quite a large operation. Plus the other hotel—it's a smaller hotel, but there's a restaurant there and I think a dining room and maybe a snack bar. So it was pretty big. Well, anyway, Joe Fanelli was the man that ran it. And he's a real friendly fella, so we got acquainted with him back there. And he was just doin' a wonderful job there, and the food was good, and they didn't have any casino, so they had to watch, you know, their prices. And a lot of people go to the clinic don't have too much money, so their prices had to be very competitive. But the waitresses were always friendly and chipper and remembered you from last year, and their uniforms were always starched real pretty. It was just a good operation. So we got acquainted, and we were lookin', and I remember Rome and I were real active in that. Finally we said, "Well, let's steal Joe Fanelli." So we knew him first-name basis then, and he'd been there twenty-one years, I think, which—and it isn't easy. And he'd been raised and raised.

So we made him—and we really did it right—made him an offer that was financially superior to what he was getting, but it wasn't an awful lot more. And we brought him out and had him look around—he and his wife, who is a real neat gal, and they're to be admired. They never had any children; they adopted five, and all five were handicapped. They wouldn't adopt anybody that wasn't handicapped. And they raised them; they have a house of ours that we rent 'em, out here on South Virginia, right near my property. In fact, I own it now, And I think maybe one or two of the kids are gone, but three of 'em are still home and they're handicapped. But they're just wonderful, and they—raisin' that family.

But anyway, Joe came with us, and since then it's just been wonderful. I mean our food—it's, of course, always a problem, and we're much larger now, you know. And we have all our restaurants and the South Shore Room and the Headliner Room, and those are very important because we want good food in there. And still there's that terrible time limit, you know. If you come in eight o'clock for dinner in the steak house and we're a little rushed, you know, well, we may not seat you till eight-ten; then you may not be finished till nine-thirty or ten. But we're doin' the best we can; there's no big thing. But in the South Shore Room and the Headliner Room, most people don't get there till seven, and the show starts at eight-fifteen. And by eight-fifteen we want the waiters out of the room. We don't want people clatterin' plates while the star is on. We're one of the few companies that do that. So there's an hour and fifteen they have to serve, you know, to get the order and get it in and get it out; and still it has to be pretty good, so that really takes some doing. And of course, Joe handles that, plus all his people. We're real proud of that, that our food is

generally pretty good in the rooms, and we get a lot of compliments, you know. Well, this is a gourmet-type dinner almost, and in an hour-fifteen, and all those people. Can you imagine at the Lake we'll have up to eight hundred people there for dinner, and most of 'em'll arrive at one time and they're go, go, go. Of course, a lot of that's our doing, but also Joe's done that.

Then there's Joe Francis at the Lake, who's our general manager there, who's very capable. He's been there many years.

Another fella down here with a direct line to Lloyd is Shep Sheppard, who I'm sure you know. He was I think born and raised in Reno. And he's been with us some twenty-five years. He was an accountant for many years. And then he was very active in turning the company around, too; I'll give him credit for that. 'cause I was president for many years, and then Bob Ring was president. And in spite of these engineering firms, we were kinda doin' it the same old way. And I'll never forget— and Shep's a very timid person; he's very—what's the word for introvert?—only the supreme introvert, just scared of his shadow. And he's a great thinker but just very timid. So he told me he wanted to see me, and I just couldn't believe it—Shep wanted to come in. You know, it was always get him, and he'd come in [head down], "Whadda you want?" And [he] wanted to see me. And as I came in, I could see he was very nervous. And I thought, gee, he's gonna quit. And he sat down and kinda got calmed down. And I said, "What is it? What—?"

And he said, "Well, I'd like to talk to you about the U company.

And I said, "What about—?" And we were makin' a million or so a year.

And he said, "Well, we're spinnin' our wheels." And between Bob and I—and Bob really wasn't very good because he'd always been so associated with me, and I'd been

successful, that instead of thinkin' how to do it, Bob Ring, he would think, "How would Bill do it?" And so he was just copyin' me. And so I was strong in some things and weak in others; so he didn't help me at all, in other words. And we were strong in this department, but I'm weak here so Bob Ring is also weak there 'cause he just kinda copied me. So Shep pointed out many places where we were really weak, and I really knew it.

And I said, "Well, what do we do about it?" I said, "I'm happy with my life-style. I work hard, but I like my cars, and I like to go to Idaho; I don't want to do any more." You know, "What can we do?"

And he says, "Let me be president for a year or so." And he says, "I'll surprise you." And that took a lot of guts, you know, to say, "Make me president."

And he sounded so good, I said, "Well, hey, maybe that's a good idea." So I went to Bob Ring, and I said, "What do you think?" And I didn't want to hurt Bob; that's the last thing I'd ever want to do.

And Bob's always fine, you know; he said, "Gee, I'm—" he said, "I don't really like this job, president, anyway 'cause people ask me somethin', and," he said, "I don't know," he said, "I always want to ask you." And he said, "Fine, let's try it." So we put him in, and he was super. In many ways he had his faults. But he was super in reorganizing the company and getting rid of some deadheads; we had some deadwood—and really hopped it up. And he had wife problems and emotional problems. They were no problem when he was just the vice president in charge of this and that. But when he got to be president, then the wife problems and the other problems— then they got to be very important. And the pressure was on him, and there was some serious problems, so we had to remove mm. And that's a real scary thing because he's a real valuable man,

and when anyone gets to the, say at the so-called top and, then gets demoted, why, ninety percent can't stand it, you know; they have to go to Harvey's or somewhere, just no way can they stand it emotionally.

And Shep took it very well. And he knew that he was in trouble, and the company was in trouble. He was so good in political affairs, community affairs and real estate; he was excellent in that. And he's very courteous, very patient. And like we do have John Giannotti (I mentioned earlier)—political—but Shep is over John in that. And the legislature's in session, why, Shep's over there, and he knows 'em all and they trust him. And in real estate he—'cept he didn't get the Santa Fe—goofed [laughter]! That's driving him up the wall, too!

Okay. Bob Martin, I mentioned. Don Stevens is under George Drews, is the treasurer who's capable. And Chuck Munson—I'm sure you know Chuck. He's under Shep; he's excellent in community affairs. And John Giannotti at the Lake, he's a super guys He's our community affairs at the Lake. Hut everybody at the Lake and you—California and all this, and the bla bla bla. And California—he really is tryin' to pull some stuff up there, but the people that John has to deal with all respect him and, you know, trust him.

Then we have another one, Lowell Hendricksen, who's Holmes Hendricksen's brother, another Phi Delt. And he was at the Lake for years, and very capable. And then HAC has been put in with our aviation department and our Middle Fork Lodge, which sounds kinda odd. But they fit very well because HAC is mechanical, and they're out of the downtown area; and our airport—we have a hangar at the airport where we keep our planes, and it's outside also. And then the Middle Fork Lodge is also—that's serviced by planes, and that's out of the same jurisdiction, so it works real good. So Lowell's only been

out there about a year, but he's doin' a fine job. It's entirely new to him, as he was assistant manager at the Lake. But he likes cars, and he likes—well, he likes business. So he's doin' a super job.

Then under him is Ralph Bartholf, who's our chief pilot, who's just excellent. I've known him for years. In fact I used to, before we even had a plane. And occasionally I'd charter a plane, very seldom, but occasionally you have to. I always drove to Idaho, but if I was late, occasionally I'd fly and I'd hire Ralph to fly me and go to maybe a car meet or two. We've been friends for years. And he went to work for us as a pilot years ago, and he's been our chief pilot for ten years, I guess.

Another one under Lowell is Clyde Wade; that's Cindy's [secretary] husband. And he's the general manager of the museum out there. He's very capable. He came up the hard way (he and Cindy both did), and he was a truck driver out there for several years. And then he did pretty good, and so he got into this and that, and he's been our manager out there for some time. And he knows—is a good mechanic. And like, well, we go on the Brighton Run every year now—have for years—and prior to the program Clyde'll be there to see that it runs right. And so whenever it's important, why, he's around in the car end—very good.

And then two people I didn't mention under Charles Franklin, our general counsel (and he's also the secretary of the company), is Doug Oien, who's our internal auditor, which is important, and Rex Shroder, who's the director of corporate security. There's another example, if you get the real professional—like our security—and we had one and we had two and we had twenty and we had forty and this and that. And they're, you know, usually very good, capable men, ex-policemen, and some young fellas comin' along. But there were

problems in that department. And plenty of capable security men that you could put on the floor could handle it. But for someone to put over 'em that could handle it, and the personalities and the problems and scheduling and so on, it was—we could never—it's almost like it was before we got Joe Fanelli, just new guy, new guy, new guy, new guy. And we finally got Rex Shroder, and he was a[n] ex-FBI. His whole life had been police work. And fact he—well, it's fun sometimes, like we go places together occasionally on the plane, and he'll talk about J. Edgar Hoover; he was very close to him for years. And you know, you've read about J. Edgar, and then some of it's true, some of it isn't. And he just says the way it is, and he's a great admirer of J. Edgar. Hoover had his faults, but I guess anyone of us would've had 'em if we'd been in the same job for forty years.

But anyway, Rex is just excellent. And he's very realistic, like when my boy, John, went to school in Switzerland. So I said, "Now there's kidnappings over there; I'm concerned. How 'bout it?" you know, "What do you think?" So Rex went over with me.

And we went there, and I was really concerned. And Rex looked at this; he looked at the school, and he looked at this and that. And being an ex-FBI man, he knows all the FBI men around the world, and there are some in Europe. So he called the FBI man in Geneva, said, "I'm Rex Shroder, former—"

"Oh, yes. Sure, Mr. Shroder," da da da.

And he said, "I'm now working for so-and-so, and we have a boy here in school," and, "What's the story on kidnapping in Italy and Switzerland?" There had been none in Switzerland up to that time, and then Italy was—.

So he told him that he wasn't concerned—the FBI man over there—that they weren't kidnapping Americans; they were kidnapping

Italians, which is true. And then also the chief of the district—the police are a little different setup than we have here, but it's similar in ways. And like the police—it's all police; there's no sheriff or anything. There is a police—it would be our country, where John goes to school, and there's a policeman in charge of that. And I think that overlaps into the city of whatever, but—. Anyway, the FBI told him to talk to him, and so he did. Rex was convinced the man knew his business, and he was unconcerned; he said, "We haven't had a kidnapping yet. If we do, we're ready to move."

And then Rex looked over the school, and on a twenty-four-hour basis. And then he went to the headmaster, and I introduced him. And he says, "It looks very good to me, except I have a recommendation." He didn't say, "Do this!" He said, "I have a recommendation," he said, "there is a time when the last—" they had a garden or something (it was kinda round), and not only workin' on the lawn, but, he was their kind of a watchman around the property, and then he went home at six o'clock. And then there was someone that kinda did it, that walked around the yard till (I guess it was a watchman, actually)—to maybe midnight. And then he was off. So there was nothin' from midnight till eight o'clock. And Rex said, "There should be someone—."

And of course, many of the professors sleep there, which was the answer he got. "But we're sleeping right here."

And Rex says, "I understand that, but," he said, "and this is just a recommendation—there should be someone patrolling the grounds from midnight to seven in the morning." And I think they did that; I think they put 'em on.

But he accomplished—you know, he just did that, and hell, he wasn't over there a week and had it all, you know—and put my mind at ease.

Okay. You want some more?

Chuck Munson, for example. He was active in the formation and first managing of the Industry Association.

Yeah. We knew him before; we were very active in that, and we pushed him, and then we stole 'em [chuckles]. Well, if I leave out any names here, then eventually they're gonna read it—aren't they gonna be hurt?

Okay. Dave Loffswold, I mentioned. He's assistant to Joe Specht. R. J. Lukas is the director of food and beverage; he's very capable. He's a pro; he's under Fanelli. And Julius Weiss is a corporate executive chef. He's under Joe; he's very capable. And Joe brought them in, of course.

Then Dan Orlich. He's quite a guy. You know, he was a trapshooter; he worked at Harolds for years. And then we got to be friends with him, very friendly. And it was a friendship basis he came to work for us for a similar job, about the same money. And he's director of special casino programs, which in effect is our junkets. He brings people in from—primarily our good ones now are from Texas, Mexico, and Northwest—Washington, Oregon. We have a lot of those during the year on our own planes. Dan handles that and does a super job.

And then there's Tom Yturbide at the Lake; he's been there quite awhile. He came up through the ranks. And he's assistant general manager under Joe Francis. And then there's an Ed Posey, who's an assistant general manager, also under Joe Francis. And Ed is one of those fellas—there're a lot of people like that, and they kinda puzzle me in a way. But on the other hand, I'm like 'em. Ed, he's a super guy in his job, but he's just—and he's real young; he's barely thirty. But when he gets around me, he just doesn't want to look at me, and he just gets real nervous. And then people say, "Gee, that Ed's good."

And I say, "Well, he acts like a nut, as far as I'm concerned!"

They say, "Well, you make him nervous."

I say, "What am I doing, just standin' here?" But he just—it's real funny.

Then Don Hill's director of our plant and engineering safety. That was our idea; we put him on. That goes way back. Oh, I mentioned that earlier that fire chief, didn't I, that retired?—who was a fire chief here forever?

I think it was [Wagner] Sorenson; he was a tall slender fella, very nice. And I'd liked him just 'cause he did a good job as fire chief. And so we knew each other. When he retired, he came to see me, and I thought, "What does he want?"

And he said, "Hey, I need a job."

And I said, "What do you want to do?"

"Oh," he said, "I'm—you know, I'm only sixty-somethin' and good—I don't want to retire; I want a job."

"Fine." And so, "What?"

And he said, "Well, I don't know. I don't have any ideas." And so we didn't really need a fire chief. Then we got to talkin' about safety, and so we hired him.

And it was amazing the number of things he'd found just the first day, you know, where the door and the escape was wrong, and the light was out over there. And so we kept him for—well, I think, until he died, I think he held that job and just turned the company around, as far as that was concerned.

Then we've had several—now it's Don Hill. And I just got a memo today from him and his daily report, and he said, "I'm retiring next month." "Dear Bill, Bob, and Rome, I've enjoyed working here," so and so.

And we have Bob Martin, I told you about, and under him's Ken Archer, who's director of construction, which he is just super. We build something—and 'course, Bob Martin's

in charge of it; Ken Archer's the guy that's right down there seem' that the beams arrive on time and all. And he's just absolutely—he's real cool. And you know, building is just almost impossible, unless you're really in it like he is. But he plans ahead, and "Oh, there's gonna be a shortage of this; shipping is such and such—" And so to watch a job that he's doing is just fun to watch it on a daily basis because, you know, so-and-so, and this time for the fixtures—there they are. They came in on the truck yesterday, you know; so-and-so and so-and-so and here's this, and then the something—oh, well, we need this. Well, they came out on the truck a month ago and put in storage because there was a threat of a strike back there, and we wanted to be sure and get 'em ahead of time. So it just goes just like this [gestures weaving together], and that comes here, and this comes here, and just zzzz, you know. When it's properly planned, it can be done.

Then we have a lady, Maggie Beaumont, who's director of fashion and wardrobe. She's been with us many years. I think she was our first—well, we had one before her. And that's our uniforms primarily, you know, and they're constantly being changed. If her style's on, then a uniform—a waitress uniform—may be good for two or three years. And of course, there'll be many uniforms in that time for the same girl, but then styles change and where we want to change the looks of them, and that's all Maggie. And she'll get—and she's excellent—(she kinda bugs me personally, but—[chuckles]). No, she's all right. She's another one that gets nervous around me. And I say, "Well, how can you stand her?" to the other people.

And they say, "Well, around us she's nice, but when she gets around you, and she gets all (you know) —overemphasizes things," and you know, that, which I just hate. But

anyway, she does a good job. Well, she's not only style-wise, but she's cost-conscious. And you'll find—and we've had 'em before—that, oh boy, this is super; then they get the bill and it's a zillion dollars for just a waitress uniform. But she really—and the material—it has to be very stylish and still cost has gotta be right down there; plus it has to be washable; it has to be wearable, you know, so—just super.

We have a George Poore, who's director of materials management, which means primarily buying. Like we bought a new yacht for Tahoe, and George was put in charge of that. We selected the yacht we wanted, the manufacturer and the—. But then it was George's baby. He negotiated the contract and the delivery date and all; he's just excellent at that. And he negotiates rock-bottom prices; we've had other people do that. That's really a profession; they can get things at absolutely rock bottom, and still the seller is a friend. They're not mad because you knocked 'em down so far. He's just so realistic, and he understands their problems. If they're overloaded on this, he may take a little more to help 'em out; and if this is in short supply, he may not demand too much immediately. He really works with them so that—"Well, yeah, George, with Harrah's, you really gotta get down there in your price, but boy, they're sure easy to work With," you know.

And when things are really in short supply, like Alaskan crab or some darn thing, from time to time, he's anticipated it and way ahead, and we're stocked up. And he works like with the food, of course, with Joe Fanelli, and with the yachts with whoever it is. So he's super.

We have a Bill Archer, director of computer services. I don't know anything about a computer, and Bill Archer knows as much about computers as there is, so about all he and I have in common is our first names are

the same [laughs]! We have our get-togethers, management get-togethers, at least once or twice a year. I try to say hello to everybody, and Bill—you know, we like each other. I'll go, "Hi, Bill, how you doin'?"

"Oh, Bill, fine. How are you, Bill?" And that's about it! What can you talk to a computer guy [chuckling]?

Well, that covers the chart, I guess.

You were saying earlier that you'd had all of these problems in the organization that led to Maurice Sheppard's removal or demotion. Would you like to discuss that a little bit? I mean just to illustrate the kinds of things that can happen in a big successful corporation?

Well, no, it wasn't so much the problems. We were goin' along fine. Nobody was quittin'; the help were happy. But we weren't really expanding any. Like I said, we were makin' a million a year or somethin'. And I was interested in my old cars, and I came to work every day, and, you know, this and that. And we had our stars, and shows changed, and the new show and the new this and that, and summer and winter, and so on. But that was it. Our earnings were going up, but we weren't running—we were, say, running at fifty percent of what we could've been, if we'd all been really [gesture, running], you know. And so Shep could see that, and I knew—you know, I was—I had a little guilt feeling, but—what the heck? I made a million and a half last year; we're makin' two million four this year. That's not too bad, you know. It just could've been, you know, a lot more than that, so that's what he could see and I knew it. I knew we weren't doin' as good as we could do, but I was happy. Boy, we're doin' fine, and—.

Then you had to remove him.

Oh, that was real sad. He has a tremendous inner thing, and it doesn't come out. Instead of saying, "God damn it!" he will—it'll fester. And oh, it's unbelievable for a man in his position, but maybe he would see him on the street, like maybe Bob Hudgens or someone, and maybe not see him, or maybe he wouldn't say hello, didn't smile or something—the least little thing. So Shep would come—comin' down the hail (his office was here), and instead of sayin', "Hi, Bob," he wouldn't speak to Bob.

And then that could go on for a week, and Bob would wonder, "That did I do?" And he'd come to me, "What—did Shep say anything to you about me?"

"No, nothin'."

And, "Well, he isn't speakin' to me," which to me that's awful; that's little kid stuff, you know. That was throughout the organization, and it just got—. And then it was Shep's "s-h-i-t list." And oh, "I must be on Shep's list," you know. And pretty soon everybody, you know—what? It was very bad. And purely, just a personality thing.

It's kinda cute—well, cute's the wrong word, but we were all, "How the hell do we get rid of this guy?" you know. And we talked about it, Lloyd, who was, you know, up there and very close to Shep, and Mead Dixon, who's my confidant in everything, and Bob Hudgens, and—"What are we gonna do? The guy's really screwin' things up around here. And what—" you know, and, "He's gotta go, but he's liable to kill himself; you know, he's very emotional. What," you know, "how do we handle this?" And this is going on for months.

So they went to Australia, and I'd been there many times. This time it was Lloyd and Mead and Shep; I didn't go for some reason. And, you know, it isn't necessary for everybody to go every time. And they were meeting some of the big people there, and not only the—I always think of the prime minister, that sort

of thing—and also some big people that were in finance. There's one man down there, and I can't remember his name; he's Sir something, very big in bank; he has a bank there, a zillion-dollar bank. And he's very friendly, always has been to us. Any money you need, Harrah's—boy, we like you, so and so.

Anyway there was a dinner arranged, and maybe there were six or eight Harrah's people or four or five Harrah's people, and maybe eight or ten or twelve of the others. And it was a tonal dining room and so and so, this and that. And so there's gonna be kinda little speeches and things. And so Shep and Lloyd were together, and Shep had flown over—of course, your hours are all screwed up—and Shep was very nervous about this speech he had to make. So he started drinking, which, of course, is the worst thing you can do.

So it's kinda funny lookin' back on it. They're rushed; the time isn't, you know, like—and they're runnin' and dressing and all. And so Lloyd goes to pick up Shep. Shep's all cleaned up, but he's [drunk], can't even see! So Lloyd is quick acting, and [to] whoever there he said, "Boy, we got a problem here! There's no way we can get him sober in time. And so Lloyd—he told me, and it's true—when he saw Shep in that condition, he said, "Shep, you just blew your job," which he did, you know; here he's the president of the company, he's over there meeting with these bigwigs, and he's drunk. It's absolutely unforgivable. So Lloyd says, "Shep, you just blew your job! Go to bed!" And of course, Shep knew that he was gonna blow his job, anyway; so that wasn't too much of a shock. And he was very relieved he didn't have to go to the dinner. So he just went and slept it off.

So Lloyd and all of 'em went. And Lloyd and Mead, told me later that—and between the two of 'em—but they both complimented

each other. They said, "Oh, Mead came through like a (whatever the word is)." And then Mead would say, "Lloyd came through like a trooper or a Trojan or whatever." And they just, you know, said, "Mr. Sheppard is delicate anyway; he's been to the Mayo Clinic, and the flight over and all, and he's really ill, and—. But we can answer any," bla bla bla, and it went off very well.

And then when we came back, why, we asked Shep just, "Give us your resignation." 'course, we were afraid then— of course, we weren't afraid he was gonna kill himself, but we were afraid that—what to do with him, you know. And he worked for us forever. So that's when we worked out the—but it was kinda touchy there, not gettin' rid of him, but keepin' him from, you know. And maybe the killing himself was going way -too far, but—.

So then Lloyd Dyer had come up very fast in the organization and was doing great. And he had been groomed to be Shep's assistant. Then Lloyd stepped in and has been president ever since and is excellent.

Okay, where do we go from there?

Tell me about the formation of the corporation then, and what made you decide that you were going public.

Oh, yeah. The corporation—you just have to when you get above a certain amount of money with the United States tax structure; you just can't accumulate a lot of money if you're not incorporated. An individual can only go so far, and then you know, you get to the—depending on what year it is, up to the seventy or eighty percent tax, where your corporation is fifty percent or less. Well, when you get into the millions, that's a lot of money, so you just have to be incorporated, and which can be done legally; and then you as the owner pay yourself a salary and so and so.

So it's much better, So that was no problem at all doing that. And then there's certain things you can't do in your corporation that you can do as an individual, but you can work around them pretty good.

And then going public, there was two reasons for that. One, primarily, I needed some money personally 'cause I could only pay myself so big a salary. And I could pay some dividends, but I needed more money than that because I'd had several divorces, and divorces are very expensive. And I'd been living high, so I just needed money badly. And the bank, you know— you can borrow and all, but there comes a point where you better start (what's the—) consolidating and getting things shaped up. So it was the sensible thing. And then the other thing, the convincer (I could've gone on without it)—but the convincer (and it's a very good one) is estate purposes. When a company's publicly traded, why, then there's—[if] you die, there's a tremendous tax and all. Tax has to be paid; well, how do we pay it? Well, like if I died tomorrow and a lot of stock of Harrah's, of course, there's no major problem. I own enough where there's—if there is one individual that owns a big share of it, then to keep the company from being sold off in little pieces, there's a ten-year period in a case like that, which'll be very easy to handle in my case because my stock can be sold on the market. Plus, when they're evaluating, the government wants to evaluate my estate, why, there it is. I own so many shares of stock and so much, there's no question; they can estimate it within the dollar. And plus the fact that there's a little protection there because they're not always too fair in judging estates. And maybe the estate is worth so much, and the government comes—"Oh, it's worth this much!" and all, and then you have to get your lawyers and fight it out, and of course, the

lawyers cost a lot of money. I needed money; plus for estate purposes it's much better. And it's not bad really; you live with it, live with it. I think it's kinda good in many ways. A lot of our stockholders are customers [laughs].

Tell me about the preparations for going public. There must have been a lot of discussion.

Oh, everyone was in favor but me, which you get that right away, 'cause many people will either consciously or subconsciously advise you, oh, you should be public, public, public; and the reason—I have a lot of reasons, but maybe the deep reason that they may or may not know is that they want to own some of it. And public they can do it, and private they can't, unless you want to sell 'em some, but—.

I'll never forget old—oh, what's the potato king in Idaho? Jack Simplot. I got acquainted with him one time; he came into the Lodge up there. And he's a self-made man; he's a zillionaire. I guess he's worth five hundred million dollars. Started in Idaho there, and with ranching or farming and potatoes. And he got into potatoes real deep and raised 'em and processed 'em and sold 'em and just on—the whole thing. He owns the whole thing. He since—one or two of his companies he sold little pieces of, but he has a whole bunch of companies, too. But he and I had a good head and head talk, and we were talkin' about that. I think that was about the time we were gonna go public. He said, "See so-and-so. And we discussed it head and—you know. It has advantages both ways. And he said, "Well, the one trouble with it," and he said, "I own it all," and he said, "I get a lot of advice," and he said, "men whose advice I trust, implicitly!— been with me for twenty years, just—boy, they say it, that's it." He said, "Except, where it comes to goin' public." And he said, "They may not

know it, or maybe they do, but," he said, "they want some of it." And so he said, "I just don't trust 'em there."

'course, another advantage of public (and it's a big advantage) is people like to own something. It's not a must; you know, you can hold people, if you own all the stock yourself for one purpose. If they're paid very highly, they still would like to own some of it. So when you're public, then you can give 'em or sell 'em some stock—give it to them—which we have now; it's workin' real good. And that's a tremendous advantage.

Like you can have a stock option plan, which we have, and we just started that. Well, MGM maybe speeded it up a little, although not much; we already had it in the works. But it went in effect this spring. Our very top man, there's not enough money in the world to move any of 'em, and I don't think they could've moved 'em before that, but now they—. And there's little hooks in it. You get so much stock and it's given to you—here's a hundred thousand dollars worth of stock; you know, a pretty big guy—and it has your name on it, but you can't have it for five years or maybe six—well, it's mostly five years. And like you quit tomorrow—"Good-bye, here's your salary; give us the stock back." And it's your stock; all you gotta do is hold your job. And we can still fire you if you go nutty, but, you know, we're gonna be fair about it. And those just work super. I don't know, we—you don't know how good they're workin', 'cause nobody's left that has that!

See, like John Ascuaga, he's the owner there, and he owns it all. And he has some real good help. But we still have a big advantage over John, employee-wise; we never lose an employee to John, unless it's somebody we don't care about. And just because of that, here they have a chance of getting this stock, and over there they just get a smile and a good salary, of

course. There's a big difference there. And you can't do that if you're not public; private, you cannot do that. Except, you know, you could give a person a little share or two, but if it isn't sole ownership, you lose all the advantages of it. Then you gotta have meetings and stuff.

How do you feel about your board of directors, and how do they feel about you?

Oh, I like 'em; I was instrumental in pickin' 'em, of course, and our inside—. See, Bill Harrah, and Lloyd Dyer, Bob Ring—(let's see, there's eight of 'em). Huh! Well, Fran [Frances] Crumley, she's the newest. Mead Dixon's my lawyer and all. Ralph Phillips, he's great; he was a former Dean Witter. He's in his seventies now, but he was a big shot in Dean Witter stockbrokers; they're the biggest western stockbroker. So he's great, you know, like any stock thing at all, why, he's all the answers.

And then Mead, of course, he's law, plus Reno—well, and Art Smith, the president of the bank.

And then Fran—we wanted a lady on the board. And we looked—that's real funny. She's only been on there about a year, maybe less. And I've know her since Elko and Newt and the whole gang. And I used to be real close friends with them, and when they had one child and two children and three children and four children and five children—been to their house many times. But we're lookin' for a lady director, and we looked and we looked and we looked and we looked. And so we were gonna bring one in from San Francisco and bring one in, and then I think it was my—I said, "Well, how about Fran Crumley?"

And, "Oh, gee!" And she's just fine. And she knows her stuff, knows how to read a balance sheet, all that stuff, better than I do, a lot better. She's very capable.

And she does know the resort business.

Yeah, sure. Oh, Elko's a neat town. I used to hang around there, and Newt, he and I were pretty good friends, as good as we could be because we really didn't have too much in common. We were both in the gambling business, but he— trapshooter, which I'm not, and a pilot, which I'm not, or not very good. He was a fun guy, always very nice. I'd go over there and hang around a few days.

We have an agenda that's prepared weeks ahead of time. And then you can bring up things not on the agenda, but most things—like Lloyd recently was invited to be on the board of the Sierra Pacific Power Company, which he accepted—that's an honor. But he said their meetings—our meetings are anywhere from—well, like we had one yesterday, and it was ten minutes. But our meeting's never over an hour. Of course, I run it and I bang it through. But Lloyd was there three hours! That's a common meeting, and he said, "They take up stuff that we would send down four levels," you know, about should this be done or that, and just little chicken stuff. He was shocked at that amount of detail that goes to the board. Sounds to me like—and I didn't discuss it with him, but just sounds to me like they have a management problem that a lot of people that should be making decisions aren't makin' 'em, and they're sendin' 'em up to the board, so, it's not good.

But any major expenditure—and a lot of it's kind of rubber stamp, too, like we're building a parking thing over here, and that's six million dollars, and it's all prepared and it's presented to the board and approved. But quite often we're already diggin' a hole and the whole thing, you know. It's done so well that the board is gonna approve it. But it's proper—there are some things that should come up to the board, especially when the

numbers are big. I think maybe anything over a hundred thousand dollars really needs board approval. And you can set that yourself, you know, depending on the company; but I think we like anything over a hundred to come to the board. I think one time it was fifty, which was dumb. I think maybe it might even be more than a hundred now; it might be five hundred. There are just some things that should come.

Then the annual meeting—when are you gonna have the annual meeting; and the dividend, you know, how much should the dividend be, and—. And then any major salary changes, why, they're board. I don't think they're absolutely necessary, but it's just a nice, clean way to do it. And a lot of things we bring up at board meetings that aren't necessary, except it's good housekeeping that anyone wants to crab, so and so, the board approved that! Lloyd didn't approve it; the board approved it, you know. So it's very—.

Like our meetings, of course, they're friendly generally, or ninety-nine percent, just because many of our stockholders are customers. Plus we do, do a good job, so the meetings aren't unpleasant at all; they're just a couple of hours, and they ask questions, and we—we know the answers. I don't think we've ever had a question asked that we didn't have an answer for, except some nutty questions. But any fair questions, a lot of it you could get out. But some people like to stand up—"My name is Joe Blow," so and so and so and so, which they could've found out that answer by reading the newspaper or reading the financial report, you know. A lot of it is just havin' fun. We always have a cocktail party afterwards, and so they all play the slot machines, so it works out pretty good! We have a good turnout at our meeting; you know, there's six, seven hundred people there. It's not too—first couple, everybody was [hand to mouth,

frightened], you know. And you've seen in newspapers and on TV where somebody—[yelling] “Oh! Why!” 'cause they'd never had any of that. 'course, business has always been pretty good, and things really get tough—is when all of a sudden the company's losin' money or maybe not makin' very much, or the dividends axe being cut or something. Oh boy, then you really gotta explain it.

It's a good thing for Nevada—gambling, I think. And some of it is not too good; I'm a little shocked some of these places that—and I'm for gambling, but some of 'em in Vegas, and I hate to keep pickin' on Vegas, but there are other places. There are some sloppy operations in the state. I like to travel by car and drive to Idaho sometimes, which means goin' to Elko, Winnemucca, and all through there. And some of the places, I look at 'em, and I look at 'em through the eyes of a tourist from the East. “Never been here before?” And I would be shocked. You know, there're some pretty sloppy, slovenly places, terrible run places, that the state should clean up. And they may not be cheating, but they're just kind of a disgrace to the—to sweep 'em out once in a while, which I guess the state shouldn't get into that. So I've seen some that made me kind of ashamed at—and they give me a bad, bad feeling.

You don't bother to count those places or watch them?

Oh no, no, no. Just anything that's competition, you want to know what's goin' on or anything that—where you're interested, and possibly locating. Like we've checked on Vegas for years, primarily down there—well, to get new ideas, plus the show business. Know who was doin' what—that was real important. But also we've got our eye on

Vegas, and we'll probably wind there some day. There's a lot of money there.

So to answer your question, we check things that are of interest to us, like—and we check Winnemucca and Wendover. Yeah, we've been to Wendover many times, been to Jackpot many times. In fact I've been to every—I like those on the border cause we were so successful in California, the South Shore, that I've always liked 'em on the line like that. I've been on every one in the state, where there's a casino on the state line; I've been there, and looked it over, astounded! I like 'em. And there's quite a few in the state, too. There's some—Arizona, you know, there's some; Utah; California; and Idaho.

You were saying that you'd probably end up in Vegas sometime. How about some of the places out of the state? There's always the talk that you're going to move into Australia; you're going to move here, there—.

Oh yeah, yeah. Well, yeah, we're workin' hard on Australia. And we looked at anywhere else, like if it goes into Florida, we're interested. We're not too interested in New Jersey 'cause it's real unhealthy back there. It's just gangster ridden; I don't think it'll ever get out of that. Florida, I think, will be okay. And anywhere where we can make some money, why, we're interested.

We've looked at London, and there's money there, but we were a little slow in getting in there, and I don't think we wanted to because it's—. They make some money; they make a lot of money. But money isn't everything. But they have such goofy laws there that I'd be almost ashamed to have a place there. Like the British law, you know, is to protect the man on the street, so the way it winds up, it's just for the very wealthy, which is all right, I guess. Then the really crazy ones

are like you can't have liquor in a casino. So you're sight-seeing, okay—"I want a drink."

"You can't have one here. If you go over there, you can have a drink."

And so you have to go in the restaurant to get a drink. So you go in the restaurant to have a drink. It's not the operators; it's the officials with their law. So, "Okay, I want a drink."

"Well, we can't serve you a drink if you don't eat."

"Okay, well then give me the cheapest sandwich you have."

No, no, you have to have a full-course meal." I mean, like that.

So it's irritating; finally you say, "Oh, the hell with it! We'll go out the door, go down the street to a pub, we'll have a drink, then we'll come back," you know—just those kind of things.

But England, their gambling is—huh!—and they do make some money; I shouldn't knock it. I just hate to operate under a—'cause I've done that in California with our Bingo games—under subterfuge, and you have to look people in the eye and tell 'em, you know—two and two is nine—it's not fun.

Well, we're interested anywhere. We're so hopeful that Australia will go this year, as we're all set up there with our partners (you have to have partners, and we have our partner), our location, everything; it's just a political thing now of the timing and the, what do they call 'em—it's like a governor of the state, but he's the prime minister or something. And when it's politically—climate is good, he's for it. And when it's good, why, he's gonna bring it out, and takes a vote of the what we call our "Senate," only, 'course, it has "House of Lords" or some darn thing. And he controls that pretty good, so when he says, "Go," it's gonna go. And he's for it—I know him personally; I met him three or four times—real super guy.

That's in Melbourne. And then Sydney's a little different. Melbourne is, I think a million, eight. Sydney's two million, two. Sydney had crooked gambling—I mean, had illegal gambling. But that's been closed the last few months, and so the climate there is getting closer, but it's quite a ways—further away than Melbourne, I think.

And then there's another place there called Gold Coast. That's up by Brisbane, which is I guess a million [people]. That's in the north. And the Gold Coast, we were there with the old car rallye. That looked like Miami Beach almost, on a smaller scale—with the beach and the hotels and all; I'd love to have a place there. Population there is a hundred thousand, permanent. And then during the season, which is wintertime, which is their summer (our winter), it's up several hundred thousand, I guess. So that looked good to me; I could just picture a place there. We were there several days.

The beauty of Australia, they'll be limited, talking about one license or at the most, two, which is always good for the operator.

That's exciting to be thinking about "Harrah's International."

Yeah. Oh, we've thought about how we'd operate, you know. We'd send our guys over, and it takes people to run it. And well, would we send 'em permanent, and we thought we'd just try it out on a—some people might want to stay there. We thought maybe at first, have 'em on a six months or a year program, I think which should be nice. And do it right—let 'em take their family and the whole thing. Probably a year'd be pretty realistic if they took their family. And then at the end of the year, maybe within nine months or something, why, "Yes, we want to stay another year," or "We want to come

back.” And, ‘course, it’d have to be worth it to them financially. If I was with the company, I’d like something like that; if it didn’t hurt my career position any, and I could spend a year down there, why, boy! And you know, you have to be well paid. That’s a long ways away, though; that’s sixteen, seventeen hours on the plane. So they don’t have much tourism down there at all; it’s all just local, as tourism is practically nonexistent. It’s just too far.

What other plans do you have for expansion? You told me earlier about the Harrah’s World.

There’s that, and then over here [points east] if we can ever get the Basque restaurant, which is—that’s some time. I think we’ll probably get it eventually because we offered three or four times what it was worth, so no matter how mad they are with us or whatever, why, time’ll cure that, I’m sure. But in the meantime, why, we’re—it’s a key piece; it’s right in the middle of everything. And we’ve drawn plans (cost us zillions) how to work around it, and it just—you come back and you can do it, but it’s just lousy; it’s like havin’ the pig in the middle of the dining room, you know. You can do it, but it doesn’t work very good [laughing]!

In fact, we were talkin’ about it at lunch today, just what haven’t we done? And financially, you can only go so far, and that’s it, you know. I think we offered quadruple the appraisal, and we could’ve offered ten times, but still that’s a lot of money. We have to answer to our stockholders, and you get up in the millions, you know, you better have some pretty good answers. Just can’t say, “Well, I thought maybe that might work.” You gotta have more than that. You gotta show that you’d make it back and all that. Well, it’s just one of those things.

I don’t know if I’ve mentioned this, but people say, “Oh, doesn’t that bug ya?” And I know, ‘cause so many things we’ve gotten that we shouldn’t’ve gotten, you know. Just at the Lake, we just fell into place up there. (I think I’ve told you that), just one after another, just plump, plump, plump, plump, plump.

And what’s fun is planning things and havin’ ‘em work out; that’s a lot of fun—having a problem, and this isn’t working, and the people won’t go to the second floor for lunch, and how do you get ‘em up there? So you have this and that, and that doesn’t work, doesn’t work, doesn’t work. And then finally you figure it out, and it does work. And that’s such a wonderful feeling. People are standing in line to get up there to eat; it’s the neatest place ever, you know, where before you couldn’t get up there with a twenty-dollar bill. And just it was one little thing. But the public’ll tell ya, if you just give it a try, and they’ll say, “That’s awful,” or “That’s good.” And they’ll tell you just like that [snaps fingers]. Doesn’t take months; in days you can find out. Well, you can find out in one day whether somethin’s good or bad, just one day.

It’s just learning to listen to people, isn’t it?

Well, and observing, you know. They’ll come up, and they go, “Ooooh” [gesture, turns away]. And then others come up—”Hmmm.” Maybe it’s too fancy in front or, you know, too bright or too dim or too somethin’. And when they go, “Oh, wow! Hey!” [Gesture, going in] “Look at this!” You know. They’ll sure tell you, real loudly sometimes [chuckling].

I told you about the butter, didn’t I, the salt-free butter? [No.] That I discovered on my first trip to Europe, and then a second trip. Nice restaurant, and the butter—I just loved it. And what is that? I knew it was butter.

And it was the butter they use in London and in the fancy restaurants of Europe. It's the standard butter; it has no salt in it. And it's just wonderful. And so I brought it back and, can you buy it in Reno? And sure, you can buy it. And wow, let's serve it in the South Shore Room, and let's be classy. With our rolls we'll have this—(what's the—there is a word for it, too). And so then I couldn't go that night. But first thing I looked at in our reports the next day was see how it went over. And the comments in the South Shore Room (and there were many) is, "What's the matter with the butter?" [Laughter] "The butter's spoiled, the butter's terrible!" What do they call that—it's salt free, but there's another name for it. [Sweet butter] —that might be right, but it doesn't sound right.

I guess the answer is that even in gambling, you can't win 'em all.

No. Well, it's becoming more prevalent, though, you know, like you go to San Francisco or L.A., a nice restaurant, and you get it there now. It has no salt. Well, the reason, it's more expensive 'cause it doesn't last as long without the salt in it, so it gets rancid sooner.

Well, it's been a fun business. I think I've said that—it's money and people. Being successful is fun, of course, and very lucrative; and it's wonderful to have money, do what you want to do, not have to worry. Sometimes I should worry about the cost, but I don't any more; I haven't done that in years. When I buy somethin', I just go ahead and buy it and then worry about it—or let Bob Hudgens worry about it! I don't do the wrong thing, usually. You know, I want to buy my wife a fancy fur coat, I just do it, which is a wonderful feeling. And fortunately I have a wife that doesn't want every fur coat she sees.

So it's been fun, and having money is fun. Anybody that says having money isn't fun is not tellin' the truth, 'cause you can avoid so many "standing-in-line" sort of things that makes life, you know, more enjoyable. Like New York, the chauffeured limo—that sort of thing is just so wonderful. Or L.A.—or [chuckles] Indianapolis—or San Francisco.

HARRAH'S TAHOE

And goin' to the Lake, I told you about how that came about, didn't I? Well, the way that came about was, I'd gone to the Lake for years and admired it up there, how good it was. But the north end I really had never cared for too much because it was so hard to get to. The south end I liked a lot. I liked to go to the north end as a customer, but I never got serious about a place there. And the south end I liked, but I thought, too bad I wasn't here before because everything was taken. And it was all at the state line there. I understood that Park owned the land there, and that was unavailable which it still is. So I had given up any thought of goin' to the Lake.

But I saw how good it was. We had a—well, this is real important, I think, that I went up there in September, usually, because in July and August I was very busy and I worked real hard. I was here every day and seven days a week and checkin'—that's when we made it. So I never went to the Lake in the summertime. I knew it was pretty good. But in September I would go, and it would be pretty slow, and middle of September at the north

end would be dead, and the south end would be slow. And they closed up usually pretty fast. So I—so what?—that's the way it was.

Well, then, we started having some Horseless Carriage tours, or get into old cars. In '48, I got the first one, -and then the 50s, I really got into old cars. They had tours various places which I went on, and so, "Oh, let's have a Reno tour," which we did. And at tours, you invite old car owners to come. And you have a package deal; you charge 'em so much money, and that includes their room and their meals and maybe a cocktail party or two. And you drive to Virginia City, or you drive here and there, and it's a lot of fun. So we started having what we called the Reno Tour, and we'd go a different place every year. So one year, part of the tour we went to the South Shore, and we went there in July. And I remember walking in the Gateway Club at the time, and it was really a crummy place, just terrible. And the business was unbelievable! And just the Crap tables were two deep, and the "21" games and the slot machines and— it was busy, busy, busy. And I'd just that day come from Reno,

and we were doin' pretty good. But we had a very nice place, and George's was a crummy place; and he was doin' two or three times the business we were. And we were there a day or two, and it was—that was the business. That wasn't just that one day; that was there.

So later I thought, "Well, too bad I don't," you know. But no way, you know. Anybody that has a place here—just not even thinkable going to ask anybody if they wanted to sell 'cause it was just, you know—nobody'd be that nutty.

I wondered if you would like to begin about how you decided on going into gaming at Tahoe.

Did I mention Eddie Questa?—asking him which way the town was gonna grow? Well, that's very interesting. That's how I found out about Tahoe because I'd been there. I guess I ran out of time on the Horseless Carriage in the sunnier, because that's when we had the tour, which I never went to the Lake in the summer. But because of the tour, I did; and I was at the south end of the Lake and saw how well George [Cannon]— the Gateway Club. Curly Musso was in there, too. They were doing awfully well. And then across the street was the Stateline Country Club, it was called. And next to that was Bud Beecher. Bud Beecher had a club there. The old man owned it, which we later bought out. But anyway, they were all doin' super business.

So I thought, "Well, too late. I should've been here twenty years ago. It's too late to get a place at Tahoe. Everything's taken, and everybody's doin' good; nobody's gonna want to sell." So I didn't even think of approaching anybody.

So then, getting back to the museum—and I did want to put it somewhere. And 395 South and Highway 40 at the time were both, I think, two-lane roads—or four-lane,

but they weren't developed too good. Then it was really a question which way the town was gonna grow. And I asked Eddie Questa, who I admired very much. So I came to see Eddie right in this office and I asked him. I said, "Which way is the town gonna grow—east, west, or south?"

And he thought, he laughed and thought. He said, "Well, let me think that over, Bill." He said, "I really haven't thought about it, but I'll think about it." And then he said, "By the way, did you know George's Gateway Club is for sale for five hundred thousand dollars?"

I was amazed, and—I don't [know] if Eddie said the five— yeah, he said five hundred. And I was amazed that it was for sale and that it was that cheap.

And then I asked him for a name of a good realtor. And he said the best one he knew of—he said there were plenty of 'em, but the one he liked—and was a real straight shooter— was the fella who started the shopping center out here— you know, Park Lane—Ben Edwards.

Well, anyway, Eddie said, "See him." So I called him, and I guess he came to see me. He was a real go-getter. I told him what I wanted. I wanted a hundred acres or whatever. And he's the one that said, "By the way, did you know that George's Gateway Club is for sale for five hundred thousand dollars?"

And I said, "Boy, if that's true, you got a deal!"

So we went from there. George didn't own the property, but he had I think a twenty-three-year lease. I always liked to buy the property, but his lease was long enough that I figured, "Gee, if it's any good, I can make enough money to buy it," which is the way it worked out. So it was just a lease, but it was a long lease. And so we went to work on it, and this Ben was a super guy at puttin' deals together 'cause there were all sorts of subleases to be signed, and there were three or four

partners, and there was a restaurant there that had three or four partners in it, and just on and on. And the partners were married and had to get their wives' signatures. And Ben just worked twenty-four hours a day just about, put the whole deal together in less than five days. And we had the place. And that was in January of '55. Then we opened around the twentieth of June that year.

What did you have to do to get ready to open?

It was a terrible run-down place—just awful. Slot machines weren't any good, and it was a quonset hut. And it looked like a quonset hut, and we couldn't afford, or we didn't want to tear it down, but we covered it so you couldn't tell it was a quonset hut. We put a false front on it, so you couldn't see the round part on top; and then inside we cleaned it up, really made it nice. Cleaned up the restaurant, and put in some of our typical Reno slot machines, made the odds on the games the same as Reno (the odds up there then were tougher than Reno just because of the short season). We made 'em the same, which was a very good idea. And then the place at the Lake was an instant success—one of the few we've had where we didn't have to really push hard to make it go. It was just needed up there. It was full from the day it opened.

But then when Labor Day came, it really fell off, and there was hardly anybody around. And so that's when we started running buses—Greyhound buses and refunding part of their ticket—which worked out very successfully. And we still do that today. In fact, at one time (I don't know if we still are), we were the largest customer of Greyhound's outside of the armed services. But we ran—I think like the other day, we ran seventy buses. But I think at first, there, we really built it up;

we got up to several—over a hundred and some a day—Sacramento, San Francisco, and Lodi, and all those little places.

It's kind of a nice thing, but we've been criticized (not too strongly) on buses, but a little bit. A critic could watch the people up there, and they're all older people and—said, those pensioners, you're taking their check and all, and that's—. Well, they're enjoying themselves, and they ride up on the bus, and everybody knows everybody from previous trips, and so on. So that's the lady that hit the big jackpot, and that's the man that did so-and-so and so-and-so. And they visit all the way up and go in, and they go to their favorite slot machine or their favorite "21" game and have a nice lunch and play some more. More of them lose than win, of course, but some of 'em win. And then when they go back on the bus at two in the morning (whatever), a lot of 'em are sleepin' and some of the winners are braggin' and some of the losers are crabbin' and it's just—. But it's a nice day's outing for them. I can't see it hurts a thing.

Was that your idea to start the buses going up there?

Yeah, that was mine, yeah, that was—everybody said, "You're brilliant," but really wasn't.

That darn guy, [Ben Edwards], too! He wouldn't listen to me, which was—. He drank pretty good—a little too much— but he got the job done. He smoked those cigarettes like they were goin' out of style, and I *really* got on him about the cigarettes. And he—"Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah"—you know. Then he fell over; it was too bad. Boy, he could put a deal— he was like a bulldog chasm' a rat on a deal. He was just goin'. Like I said, all these partners and their wives—and you have to get the signature. Ben would just go to the

house and, "Excuse me, I know it's Sunday night at nine o'clock, but it's very important we get this paper signed. Here it is," and get it. And so many realtors or people on deals will say, "Well, it's Sunday, it's late, we'll do it tomorrow," you know. Then Monday, why, da da da; Tuesday—it could drag on for months. He's just quite a guy.

He was a good man. He was good for the City. Well, imagine at that Park Lane, you know, all those landowners out there. And he had to run around to them; those were—that was a big deal, you know. And they—long-term leases, and some would sell, some wouldn't—boy! I think it's Sonner Greenspan is the manager. He was [Ben's] guy; he was his assistant, yeah. He's a good man.

Anything more that you want to say about the early days at the Lake? The other old-timers, the people who were your competition up there.

Yeah, I have a story on Harvey [Gross] that's pretty good. He's a competitor. And I can say good and bad about him, but you can say good and bad about all your competitors. Lately Harvey and I are—he's a year or so older than I am, but we're gettin' up there. And we've mellowed. So I run into him at various events once or twice a year, and we have a drink together and shake hands and smile and remember the old days—oh, ho, ho. And oh, we're buddy-buddy. But Harvey was a tough competitor in many ways—still is.

But one story I like to tell on him and bust his bubble—of course, he's a multimillionaire now, which is fine. But one time he had this little tiny place up there, and I was there in the off-season. I remember he stayed open all year. He says he is a pioneer up there, which I guess he is because he did stay open all winter. But he had about four slot machines

and one "21" game, and it was Harvey and another fella and they ran it. That was it, which is okay.

But then one year things were pickin' up up there. I think it was right after the war. And Harvey—it was either a dime machine or a quarter machine, which he didn't have. He had about ten slot machines. And he wanted to know if he could borrow, I think it was a quarter machine till his came in. And I said, "Yeah." I didn't rent it to him; I just let him have it, which was no big deal. Maybe it was a dime machine.

But then months went by and I didn't get my dime machine back, and so finally I called him up. And I said, "Hey, where's my dime machine?"

He said, "Oh gee. I'll send it back to you."

I said, "Okay." And it didn't come, and I didn't need it; but then it started to irritate me, and I didn't get it back.

So I asked him—no, hadn't come in. So then I called him up again. I was really mad—I don't get too mad, but I got mad. I said, "Harvey, are you gonna send that machine back, or do I have to come up and get it?"

And he said, "I'll send it back, I'll send it back!" And he did, but—. I don't remind him of that any more, but when he gets putted up with his millions, why, I think about it and have my own little laugh.

Isn't that kind of unusual for somebody to borrow a slot machine?

Well, it was right after the war, and there weren't any of 'em—it was just what you had. They were gettin' ready to start to make 'em again, so they were just—you couldn't buy a new one, you had to buy a used one, and they were all in business. So for a year or so there, it was real tough to get one, but he just kept it. I think he forgot it, probably. Harvey's okay.

What's the difference between competition there at the south end and what goes on at the north end?

Well, they're competitors with each other; they're not competitors with the south end. People that go to the south end—they aren't the same people that go to the north end (maybe they are today, but—). See, the north end, you can't get to. I like to say that, 'cause I don't have a place there. But it's—south end is easy. The road isn't the best in the world, but you just get on Highway 50 and forget it, where the north end, you have to watch for the turnoff and take this so-and-so and go by what is it—the ski—Squaw Valley and keep goin', and it's just—if the north end of the Lake was on Highway 80, look out! That'd be super. But it isn't, so—.

Did you take all that into consideration when you were thinking about buying at the south end?

Oh no. Just the south end was for sale—well, I knew the south end was ten times better than the north end 'cause our tour would go to the north end the sane day—I could see what was happenin' up there. And it was just—well, the north end wasn't comfortable because it was squeezed in on that little narrow road and the Lake right there—it was pretty—and the mountain, and there was no room for parking, there was no—it just wasn't a fun place. And I would love to have a place there but it was just—. The south end, there was plenty of land, plenty of—an awful lot of trees in there. And they hadn't bothered; really, that's amazing—this George's and Stateline Country Club—all of 'em—they could cut 'em—there was no Forest Service—no whatever it is that you have to go to today.

And they just said, "Why don't you chop down a tree?"

And "Oh," they said, "they can park up the street." People are parked all over every which way.

And we went in there, and I asked—see, that was under a lease. So I went to (I mentioned his name) the senator in Carson City, Ken Johnson. I remember I went to Ken, and I said—you know, he owned it, and I had the twenty-three-year lease. "Ken, those trees," da da da. "Can I cut some down?"

He said, "Sure."

And I said, "How many?"

He said, "Cut 'em all down if you want to." He was super; as long as I paid the rent, he was fun. And I did; I cut 'em all down. And there were plenty around. Oh, no, I didn't cut 'em all; there were a few that did no good to cut down, so I left them, of course, But I cut most of them down and put in three or four hundred parking places. And the rear entrance where people could—kind of made a tremendous thing—just people poured in. 'cause I knew—I was up there; I had a car. I had a terrible time parking. That's still true today. A lot of people don't—you see as you travel around; you see a place that doesn't have any parking, and not doin' too good.

Did you just lift a staff out of here and carry it up there?

Yeah, mostly. But I mentioned Curly Musso earlier; he was a partner of George. And Curly didn't want to sell out. Curly liked it there. But as his partner wanted to sell, Curly went along. I don't know how they worked it out between themselves.

And then Curly went to work for us right away. And he worked out fine. He was kind of the old school over the— might've run a strong game (I don't know that he did).

Curly just worked out beautiful for us, and he worked until he retired a few years ago. And he still lives at the Lake, and he comes around; I see him four or five times a year. He comes to all our shows. When any of our executives retire that amounted to anything, we might give 'em a gold card, which is for our good customers, but we also give gold cards to our excellent employees. And that's a card—it is gold; it's not real gold, but it looks like gold. And it's metal, and it has their name on it, and it's good for a comp at any of our shows or restaurant or anything like that. And they would be—Curly would be—comped anyway, if he went to the show just because of who he is. But still, having the gold card is quite nice. He was delighted at that.

I guess most of the people at the Lake outside of Curly, we took up from here. Rome Andreotti spent a lot of time up there. And Lloyd Dyer, the president, went to work up there as a summer job during his college vacation. That's how he started, but he started at the Lake. I guess about everybody up there we took up from Reno. And like most things like that, where you move executives around (which lots of national companies have the problem), you find that there were many people in Reno that wanted to go to the Lake the worst way, that liked the sailing or liked the scenery or liked something, and there were many others that didn't want to go to the Lake at all, didn't want any part of it. But good ol' law of averages took care of that, so we managed to find plenty of help for both places. It was a very successful place at Tahoe.

Did I tell you the story about my father and the letter? Yeah, he wrote me a letter. He didn't write me much 'cause we saw each other quite a bit. So when he wrote me, it was usually fatherly advice, which wasn't too much—he'd kind of given up on me by then. But I bought the place at the Lake and

opened it up; then he wrote me a long letter (he always wrote longhand), and you knew his letter when you saw the envelope 'cause his left-handed style. And "Dear Bill" (this was when we opened in Tahoe), it said, "I think you made a big mistake in going to the Lake, 'cause you had a lot of problems in Reno, and you finally got 'em straightened out. And you got everything paid for down there, and you got some money, you're independent for life (if you want to be). But no, that wasn't good enough, you had to go up in the backwoods up there [chuckles], take on this thing—you're way in debt" (which I was), so-and-so and so-and-so. And I don't think he said, "You're a damn fool," but it was a real strong letter.

So I was impressed, but I knew that, you know, it looked good and it was good. And so first year, that place up there made a million dollars on its own. And I had a statement on that, 'cause we kept them separate, which we still do—and it showed a million, hundred thousand or somethin'. So I got a copy of that and a copy of my father's letter, and I sent it to him. That's all, just his letter to me and the statement for a million dollars. And he got a big kick out of that. He told everybody he knew about so—da da da da. Which in a way was a good example of us, 'cause I was really kinda—he was very conservative, which says—I don't mean that derogatory, but that was his nature. And he was careful, and he never made a lot of money real easy like I guess I had; so money came harder, why, you watched it better. But he was more conservative than me.

What special kinds of problems or satisfactions, arrangements did you have to make in establishing a branch?

Well, we just had two operations instead of one. It was really—you just do what you

have to do. And you had two operations. We went back and forth, which was one nice thing about it, 'cause all top executives got nice automobiles to drive and my automobile became a business deduction for the first time in my life, which was very pleasant. We had established good communication and teletype and all that sort of thing, so we kept in touch real good what was goin' on. So the operation wasn't too difficult.

One of the things that happened that same year was that the legislature passed the Gaming Control Board law that made a regular investigatory agency.

As far as the state and all, we just went along. We were always a good operation, so whatever the law was, why, we just went along. So it was no big deal with us. And I'm sure we probably crabbed about more paperwork, more this and that; but it wasn't—no problem.

Then, of course, another thing about—small thing—about being at Tahoe and Reno is you go through Carson, every time you go; so it used to be a big thing goin' to Carson, almost. And with our new operation we were there—everybody was there—several times a week. Plus something we'd done ever since (which is good) is like we go to see all the shows—or I do, or most of the top execs see all the shows at the Lake. Our headquarters are in Reno, but we a Tao, to get out of our shells, which everybody needs to do, including me, we'll have—board of directors will be one month in Reno, and next at the Lake, and then our various other meetings. Entertainment meeting will be one month in Reno and one month at the Lake, and that way we do have to circulate, which is very good. So it really hasn't been very difficult operating both of 'em. Another thing that's extremely handy about it, the places are far enough apart (and they

draw from a somewhat different clientele) that we can use our same stars at both places. And of course, our Reno room isn't quite as large as our Tahoe room, so we don't pay quite as much money; but many of our stars because of friendship and whatever, will work both places—like Jim Nabors and Sammy Davis and just about all of 'em have worked both places.

In the meantime, our club at the Lake really wasn't—it was an old quonset hut, as I said, and there was Stateline Country Club across the way, which had a lot of land, or more land than we had, and also was a good—at least from the outside it looked pretty good. It was an old, old, building. But it was a real nightclub, and Sahati had it—Eddie and (there were two Sahatis). Yeah, there were two Sahatis up there; there was Eddie, and [Nick]

They owned the Stateline Country Club, and they ran it just awful. They were crooked and full of shills and everything, but it was a nightclub. They owned the property and had made a failure of it, and Eddie was quite a player himself. In fact, he came in here in our place and won forty thousand dollars one time, which was the biggest loss we'd had. But they owned the property over there, and they'd made such a mess of it that [Nick] Sahati was the orneriest man I ever met in my life, an absolutely rude, crude, push, shove, spit, yell, scream—you name it—just absolutely no manners, morals, or anything—just an awful guy. And that's the reason that he failed in the place, but they owned the property. So they leased it to some operators from the Bay Area who weren't very good. There were two or three of 'em; I don't remember their names. But these fellas, they got in the lease, and they knew how ornery this Sahati was. They didn't think they could get along with him, and they thought they might have a successful thing; they weren't too open with him. So they had

an option in the lease to buy the property for so much money.

Well, we were doin' real fine on our side of the road. Next to us was Harvey's, who was a strong competitor. Then across the road was the Stateline Country Club. And next to that was the Nevada Club. That was right on the line; that was a little place. Stateline Country Club was quite a big place. It had a showroom and everything. And that had been—that was there when I first come to Nevada, just about—old-timer. He just ran in the summer. And it was a real crooked place.

And, let me think, who owned the Nevada Club—it was Bud Beecher.

But anyway, the Stateline Country Club was crooked; it was a terrible place. And it changed hands all the time, and it was just dirty. Bad news. And then there was a place next to it, a little hole in the wall. Well, it was called the Main Entrance because it was between Beecher's Nevada Club—Beecher's Nevada Club was right on the line across the street, and that was an honest place, and they just ran in July and August. That was Bud Beecher, and I forget the father's name; he was quite a guy. And next to that was the Main Entrance, which was a little tiny place, and it was real crooked. And next was the Stateline Country Club. And that was crooked. They were bad for the area. But we were doin' fine. And Beecher was a good friend. He liked to run in July and August; we ran all year. And then he would go to Palm Springs. And he made a lot of money 'cause they had pretty high limits. They had a good reputation. And I'll never forget—he'd had no restaurant. And people would say, "Where can we eat?"

And he'd point right across the street at us. He said, "There's the best place at Tahoe to eat." He would send real good customers, he'd send 'em over and pick up their check, and if

they played over with us, fine; it was all right with him.

So they were just wonderful. And Stateline was terrible, and it was doin' awful. And Nick Sahati owned it, who was a real terrible guy. But there were some people in there, and they had a lease, and they wanted to sell me the lease. And it was a three-year lease—or two years. And I said, "No! I don't want that!"

And they—"Well, don't you think it's a good place?"

And I said, "Well, it could be. But," I said, "two years, and," I said, "then Nick Sahati'll kick ya out on your ears."

And they said, "Oh, no, there's an option in there—an option to buy the property."

And I said, "Huh?" And I said, "Bring me the lease!"

And they brought me the lease, and there was an option in there. I took it to Mead Dixon, I'm sure—"Is that a good option or—?" (I don't know if Mead was with us, then. That was '55—yeah, he was workin' for us.)

"Yes, that is a good option." So we bought it. And of course, Nick fought in all directions. And then at the end of two years, we exercised the option, and, the meantime we'd fixed it up.

And about that time (that's one of those interesting things)—Beecher, you think, is gonna be there forever 'cause they're makin' a lot of money, they're wealthy and all. And Bud, the son, was real sick. He's still alive in Vegas, but he's real crippled up. I go see him every year or so. And his father really ran it, and he was real sharp; he was real old but real sharp. And then, as old people do, he just came apart all of a sudden. I think he died suddenly. So there was nobody to run it. So Bud called me up, and he and I made the deal. And we made the deal in two minutes—'cause it was worth maybe two million dollars. And

what it made and the location—and I said, “What do you want?”

And he said, “I want two million dollars,” and just zing, zing, zing.

So we got that place, and we had the club. And then there were a bunch of little pieces around there, like there was one—I got the property from Park, but there was a piece right in the middle.

That—oh, a fella that had—see, Brooks Park’s father (what was his name?)—D. W. [Wallace] Park—that’s an important name. He was a wonderful old guy; we spent a lot of time together, and I’d talk to him for hours. And he would never say no, but he would never say yes. And he never sold a square foot, except to this guy. And he was a Basque. But for some reason, old man Park liked him, and he sold him maybe a quarter of an acre right in the middle of everything. So we had this property at Stateline; then we bought a piece here and a piece there from little odds and ends. But this one piece, it belonged to this fella, and it was right in the middle of everything, and we had a lease on it, of course, And the rent was nominal, but it was always short. And here’s you know—so we had to get that. And the guy that owned it was a real nut.

So I made friends with him (and when I work at it, I can make friends). And I went to see him, and he was a real quiet guy and kinda bashful, and he was a brickmason, I think. And he did wonderful work. And we had him do—but how many chimneys can you build? [Laughter] He had a phobia that he would come in the restaurant, and he would get a piece of glass; he’d bring it in his pocket. And somehow, he had it worked out real good. And then he—“Oh, oh” [gesture, pulls from his mouth] (he’d be eating; he always ate at the lunch counter), “Oh!” And a piece—and his mouth’s cut. And somethin’—it was chipped, you know.

So the first time, “Oh, gee!” you know. And then, second time—and this is within a year (we settled, you know, for eight hundred dollars or somethin’). And then the second time, and my guy said, “Well, gee, he’s just a phony. You know, he’s done it across the street, he’d done it in Carson City, he’s done it all over. He’s no good,” you know. “Forget it!”

And I said, “No, no, no. Pay ’im!” you know.

So, “Whad’ya payin’ him for?”

I said, “Never mind! Pay ’im!”

So then he would work it—well, he got us three or four or five times. And it’s drivin’ the other end, you know; they didn’t see the whole story, or even if they did, it just drove ’em up, you know. “Here you’re payin’ a guy twenty-seven hundred dollars for nothin’! It’s a dirty rob,” you know [laughing].

“It’s all right! It’s okay,” you know.

And then he’d come to me, and he’d tell me, he said, “Bill, I’m not,” you know. “My friend Bill,” he said, “some of your people think it’s phony,” he said, “that’s not true!” He said, “I came in and I—” he said, “I know it sounds funny, but,” he said, “I bit into that hamburger and there was a great big piece of glass, and I cut my tongue—” [points to mouth]. [Laughter]

So eventually we got the piece of property! But the only way we got it was by payin’ of f. And he was a good guy, otherwise. He was a good citizen, he didn’t get drunk, and he did a job for you; he did it, you know, and always courteous and polite and every—. But it was absolutely—he was a nut in that department.

But anyway, we got it, and what a relief that was, ’cause we owned, you know—I think we put eight or ten pieces to put the whole thing together. And this one right in the middle— ooh! [Laughter]

Okay. Well, then we—forget when we opened that, but we ran em both. But that

became the Number One right away. And we ran the ol'-we called it the Lake Club 'cause it was on the Lake side of the road. We just ran it summers. And it was profitable, but our main thrust was over there. And then it got where it really wasn't too profitable because we split our help, and they were runnin' back and forth across the street, and Harvey [Gross] needed it badly.

That's a cute story, too. And he sent Bill Ledbetter, who was his Number One guy at the time, to see me. And Bill and I were always very good friends 'cause Bill was a good, honest, straight kid; plus he was super nice to my father. Bill and my father were just real good friends. They were on the sewer board together up there and—just wonderful. I like Bill very much; I still like Bill. And he and Harvey had a falling-out, which is another matter.

Harvey sent Bill to see me about buyin' the—'cause he knew the Lake club, we didn't need it. So okay, "Will you sell it?"

And I said, "Well, I'll think about it." And, "What kind of—?"

"Well, uh-huh, it's uh," you know—he'd never bought much, so he was kinda cute—looked like a little high school kid. He always looked young for his age. "Well, it's—" he's tellin' me all that's wrong with it, you know. "The building's not very good," and so on and so on.

I said, "Sure, but it's right on the state line, and it's a key piece for you guys," and so and so. "What'll you give me?"

"Well, I'll give ya a million and a half."

And I said, "Oh, that's ridiculous! No way."

So, he said, "Well, that's all I'm authorized."

I said, "Well, you go back to Harvey," and I said, "I don't want to insult anybody, but," I said, "it's just worth more money than that."

And he said, "Whad'ya want?"

And I said, "Well, I don't really know. But," I said, "you want me to set a price, I'll set a price."

And, "No, no, that isn't—we'll make you an offer."

So then he come back—and this goes on for a year or two or so and so—"Two and a half million."

And, "Oh—."

"Three—." And I don't think I ever quoted him a price.

And then, finally Bill was still in the picture. And the price kept goin' up and up and up and up and up. And what we really wanted—I think we had it appraised at three million dollars. And so my guys actually were ready to sell it for three million. And I said, "Poohy! I don't care about appraisal!" I said, "You just use that when it's— you're tryin' to buy somethin', and, you know, you can get it. But," I said, "to sell somethin', and the appraisal is so much, and you think you can get more, I'm not hooked on a price; I think I can get a lot more." And I said, "I'm thinkin' like Harvey—I gotta have that piece!"

So, okay, I mentally had a figure of five million five hundred thousand; five million five hundred thousand, that's a lot. You know, that's more 'n appraised, and it's worth it to Harvey; he can get it back in a few years. So that's my number, but, you know, you don't always want to put it out. So then we're goin'—Bill and I—and we got Bill up to four and a half. So they went—they got to tour and a half, and they sat there for, oh, a year or so. And I could just figure, every time I'd go to the Lake, I'd think, "Poor Harvey, he's sittin' there thinking [clenched teeth], 'Goddammit!'" [Laughter]

So finally Bill come in, and I was about ready to sell it for five, but, you know, what the heck?—and we needed the money at the time. We had a lot of loans. We needed the money. And so Bill come in with the five, and I said, "Naw, naw. Five and a half—that's the

price." So he knew, it would've been a big thing in his life if he could've made that deal.

He went out. So then it sat for about six months, and then Harvey called me up, 'n which Harvey never calls me up [chuckles]. And Harvey—"Hi, Bill, ol' buddy!" (you know) "This is Harvey Gross."

"Oh, hi Harvey, ol' buddy!" [Laughter]

"Can I come and see you?" He said, "I want to talk to you about that property." He said, "Bill's been talkin' to ya," and he said, "I've always said it's not good—"he said, "I made a mistake there. It's not good to send somebody to do your own job." He said, "You and I have always gotten along fine." He said, "I think we can straighten this out."

So Harvey came down. Harvey was a rich man then, and he still is, of course. So I'm thinkin', you know, "How do I work this?" And I'd've sold it for five, but I thought, "Well, I we— we needed the money; we needed it pretty bad.

Harvey come in—"Hi, how are ya? How's your wife? How's your this, how's your that?" [Laughing] You know—twenty minutes worth! "Oh! About that property up there—" And you know—"Bill, that's a lotta money! It appraised at three million, two—. We offered you five, and," this and that. And he said, "Isn't there some way we can get together? You want five and a half."

And I said, "Yeah, I think there's a way, Harvey."

He said, "What is it, what is it?"

I said, "Let's split the difference."

And he said, "Okay!" [extends hand] [Laughter]

So then he went back, and we heard it all over the hill about—"Goddamn that Ledbetter! lie's down there talkin' and on and on and this and that," and he said, "I'm down there twenty minutes—I make a deal," you

know, [laughter] which poor Bill—nobody ever worked harder than Bill did.

But anyway, now we got five, two-fifty cash, which was pretty nice—or mostly cash. And we needed it. And it was a good deal for everybody. But deals are fine—I mean, most of 'em [chuckles].

But then we built the South Shore Room, which opened in December of '59, just before 1960. And of course, that opened—had it tough at first; but we did have our big room, and we concentrated on our stars. And we opened for the Winter Olympics, which was a mistake because the Winter Olympics were at the other end of the Lake; plus the visitors to the Olympics and the athletes were all pooped out at night and eight o'clock, it was over. So that was a big mistake.

And then Harvey had hotel rooms, and Sahara came along— they had hotel rooms. But what money we had, we put into other things, which I think we did it right. And we—"Oh, you should have rooms," but we had the wonderful shows. And we had good acts and we had pretty good food (good as anybody, I guess), and we just didn't have the money for the hotel. Like Harvey built a hotel in about six months, and it was just a bum hotel. You build a hotel that fast, and it was just another hotel, just a "Holiday Inn" type thing.

Then my former wife, Scherry, and I had thought about it for years, if we ever built a hotel, how we'd build it; and every place we ever went that was a nice hotel, we copied it— every idea. And I had a file—hotel ideas. And like the two bathrooms—that was our idea, and just a million things that we saw was good. We'd measure the size of rooms, and we'd measure the bed, and we'd measure this, and it all went into the file.

So then when we were ready to build a hotel, why, we knew what we wanted.

And we got it, and of course, there was no compromise there; I'm real proud of that 'cause that was a little difficult because we do have people in our management and on the board and all that are the ROI—return on investment—"will you do it that way," and you know, and which Harrah's can't run on ROI 'cause we'd lose all of the qualities that have made us as good as we are because our service would go down, our cleanliness would go down, our everything would go down. And you can't, so you have to put that out of your mind. It's very difficult; it's one of the most difficult things I have right now is to keep up the standard and just—I'd say, "The hell with the ol' ROI!" I mean it's a good idea or it isn't, and poohy, you know. It costs a little more; with the two bathrooms and all, a hundred thousand dollars a room for those rooms. And of course, it 11 take a while for 'em to pay. But also, at fifty to sixty dollars a day, the rooms are all full all the time, which is something—plus the word of mouth we get and the write-ups we get, so I think it was a good one. I'm proud of that hotel.

And somethin' I heard the other day that made me feel real good, Frank Sinatra, who is a good friend of ours, and people are surprised he works 'cause he's got a lot of money, you know; he doesn't have to work much. But we're friends, plus he gets paid good, of course, but we also fly him around in our airplanes. I'm proud that he works for us. And he's been everywhere, and he's without any question (and I may try to use it, I don't know)—he says, "That hotel is the best hotel in the world." And it really is. We may not have as many restaurants as some, but as far as the rooms are concerned, and—I've been, not all over the world but all the leading countries of the world, New York or London or Paris or Hong Kong or wherever—and there's nothin' even close, not even close.

I'm real proud of that; there's just nothing even—the Mandarin at Hong Kong and all, and that's a nice hotel, and they have excellent standards ('course, their help is cheaper over there) , but the rooms aren't just designed as good. And, of course, they don't have the two bathrooms and the—on and on.

Plus our room service. It's always bugged me, you order breakfast—and it's still true—I'll order breakfast, and then, well, I can take a shower, I can shave, or I can get dressed, and it's not gonna be here; I know darn well it isn't. But it might be here. So I sit around and wait and wait and wait, and the clock's goin' by and I—someplace I want to go, or I wouldn't be up—forty minutes to an hour just about anywhere in the world. And there's no reason for it, except there's nobody seem' that it gets there.

So we went real strong, and we set I think it's fifteen minutes for breakfast. Fifteen minutes, that's right. Fifteen minutes for breakfast. If it's any longer than that, the waiter and the kitchen, everybody has to write a report why it was longer than fifteen minutes.

And it's real easy to do, too. First you have to get the message you want it done. See, otherwise it's just— most room service is secondary to the regular kitchen. So okay, the waiter isn't out in the coffee shop, is free; he can go up, you know. Ours, it's set up, and also we have here [in Reno], and then at the Lake even better. The room service kitchen isn't on the floor; like it's a twenty-four-story hotel, our room service kitchen is maybe on the tenth or twelfth floor, so that he doesn't have to go but a couple of floors. And then there's an elevator that's only for room service. Otherwise the guy's got it tied up with the luggage, and the poor waiter sittin' there with the order, and they get no elevator. So they have to have an elevator. So all those things—it can be done, and we've done it. And people

are just so amazed; they'll order breakfast, and zing—the door is ringin'—time you put it down.

'course, there are places like that; you know, we aren't the only one. In London, especially, it—Savoy—that's kinda where I learned it. And of course, they have a butler on every floor (they don't call him a butler; they call 'im somethin' else). But your room, push the button on the wall for room service or room waiter—he's a waiter. You push it and he's there—it's really fun. I usually have the same suite; I think he's stationed just a few steps away. But I'll push the button, and I hardly get my hand away, and he's unlocking the door, coming in—"You called, sir?"

I said, "Yes. I would like—" da da da da da da da da.

Hmmmm [gestures writing]. So he's gone, and it's just around the corner. And you can see—you can walk by in the hall, and you can see the table set up in there and all, you know. So the table's already set, and the o.j., and the so and so, and so and so; and he's back in ten minutes, unless it's maybe a dinner. Well, then like the steaks or something have to come out of the main dining room. But like for breakfast or lunch—well, mostly breakfast—they have the whole thing right there, and t-t-t-t-t and here it is, so why not?—you know. Why not please people? And it's no harder, makes it better for everybody. We sure get lots of letters on it, though.

And then the two bathrooms, too—plus being nice. It's so many times that we're runnin' late, you know, and like Verna and I, we love two bathrooms. Wherever we go, we order two rooms connecting if we can. Sometimes you can't get it, so now we have a procedure which we've worked out, which works real good. Like I'll get up first 'cause I always wake up first. And I'll tiptoe in the bathroom and shower and shave and put my

socks and shorts on and come out, and like breakfast we order the night before—seven o'clock. By then breakfast's arrived, and I'm all through with the bathroom. And we have our breakfast, and then she wants to go in the bathroom, it's all hers, and all I have to do is get dressed. So, you know, you can work it out.

But the beauty of it—everybody doesn't plan that way, and most people are running late, right? Like you come up, you're goin' to the Lake, and you're drivin' up from San Francisco. And you get in Marysville or Placerville. And the roadblock and all, and the truck and all, and so and so. You get there, and you want to be in the show at seven o'clock. Well, you don't get there till five-thirty or something, and this and that, you know. And so what do you do? And plus, the guy usually is the player, not the wife; she's maybe slots. But the guy—and I'm talkin' about the gambling business—so he has to wait for her, he has to get in and all this. But he has his own bathroom; she has her own bathroom, so she can go in and do her hair and she can fumble around as long as she wants. And he can rush in and take a shower and z-z-z-z [gesture shaving]—"Honey, I'm goin' down to see if our reservation—" or, you know, maybe he'll say, "I'm goin' down to play. And I'll see ya in—" So, instead of him being hung up there waitin' for his wife to get out of the bathroom, he's downstairs shootin' Craps. So in the long run it's gotta work out. Plus he's much happier; she's happier [chuckles].

'cause everybody's always late, 'cause things take longer, and you know—I'm usually on time, but I leave earlier than necessary just because of the unforeseen things that—I have a horror of being late.

And there's a story I like to tell. Captain Whittell—I mentioned him before, didn't

I? Did I mention when Lloyd [Dyer] and I went down to see him, and we were always on time?

Well, we went down to see 'im, oh—Lloyd and I must've gone down to see him, oh, six or eight times, and then I went on my own six or eight times to Woodside. And I just liked him; I was tryin' to buy some property at the Lake, but also it was fun. You know, what the heck, an afternoon with George Whittell is well worth it, you know. And he always had story after story after story. I remember 'em all—and cars and planes and real estate and people and on and on. But I liked to be on time. He never told me but he told Lloyd. And we would get there, and our appointment's two o'clock, and we'd get there maybe a quarter to (and nothing more annoying to me than somebody early). And of course, Whittell was a cripple, so he wasn't doing anything except sittin'. But it's still annoying. And so quarter to, why then we'd drive and there's a way I could drive around the corner without bein' seen. If anybody's lookin', they couldn't see us from the property just in case somebody was lookin' out the window. So we'd park around the corner until it was one minute of two, and we knew exactly. And so we would drive up, and we would drive up in front exactly at two o'clock to the second! [Laughs] And he never knew how we did it. He thought, "Well," you know, "it's nice to be on time, but how can you—you know, and you have to rent a car and get on the freeway and all this stuff—how can you get here exactly at two?"

So finally he asked Lloyd. He said, "How can you guys get—" [laughs]

And Lloyd laughed; he said, "Well, didn't you know we sit around the corner?!" [Laughter]

And Whittell thought that was the cutest thing! He said "Don't ever do that!" He said, "Sit out in front if you gotta sit" [laughs].

You were talking about how people are always late.

Oh, that was for the reason for the bathrooms and all. Well, it's nice anyway, but it pays off really. I don't know exactly dollar for dollar, but plus the public relations and family relations, it's gonna pay off. And just the letters, on and on and on. And then friends stay there, and they—"Oh!" and I love it when they don't know it. Like I had the Schusters, who is the son—I think I mentioned him before—son of the man [that] drove the Thomas, and they were here last week or so. And she'd never been out here, and he hadn't been out here since he first came out with his father to identify the car, which embarrassed me, so I invited 'em out. And they came out and stayed a week. And they [were] here and there and everywhere. So then we showed 'em, and we went to the show with 'em and had 'em to dinner and so on.

So then they were goin' to the Lake, and I didn't tell 'em a thing about it. And then we didn't see 'em afterwards because we had to leave. So we had dinner, then we had lunch with 'em out there. And then we said, "Good-bye," and "we'll see you at the Lake, and you'll see" so and so and so and so.

So then we got a little "thank-you." They went to see his sister or something in New Mexico, I think, on their way home. And we got a card from there, and she said, "You're gonna get a big long thank-you letter later, but this is just a little card," and she—so and so and so and so, "but the two bathrooms at the Lake were unbelievable!" And of course, they didn't know it to walk in, and so they thought, "Well, this must be the finest suite here.

And then the bellman said, "No, no, this is our standard room." [Laughter]

STARS AT TAHOE

We had entertainment at the Lake, which we didn't have in Reno. The Gateway Club did have some entertainment. And all the places up there had it, and they were what today we'd call "lounge groups"—except for the Stateline Country Club, which was a true nightclub, with dancing, floor show, everything but the stage lounge.

Well, then, in our place we put in a small stage; we didn't have too much room. We put in the small stage, and then a nightclub that seated around two hundred and fifty, I think—three hundred—and started with entertainment. Where across the street was the big names, we just had the smaller names. Like across the street, I remember, they had the Ames Brothers, which was a big name. And we had this and that—the Goofers, that sort of act. But it was quite successful, and it brought people in. We liked it.

But then Louis Prima came along, and somehow we got him. And he was very popular. Louis Prima, Keely Smith, Sam Butera and The Witnesses was the group. And they pulled people from all over the Lake—pulled people up from Reno. So they didn't come on till midnight. And they did three shows a night; so they did one at midnight and say one at two-thirty in the morning, and just absolutely packed the place. I went around a few times, say at two in the morning, and our casino at South Tahoe was full of people. And the bar was full, of course, because they appeared by the bar. And the whole place would be jumping. And the rest of the places around the Lake were deserted. It was—he was a tremendous draw. And his salary kept going up, and we went right along with it because we were doing so good. And I remember he was five thousand and six thousand, and finally we paid him ten

thousand dollars a week, which was unheard of for a lounge group. I think the biggest of big names then got twenty-five thousand a week, and that was super big. Dennis Day, I remember, at the Riverside, got twenty-five thousand, which was—. But anyway, Mert Wertheimer (and I think I was living at the Riverside at the time), he was an ornery old guy. He was tryin' to get Louis Prima to work for him, and Louis was real happy with us. And finally he came to me, and he said, "Are you out of your mind? Payin' a lounge group ten thousand dollars a week!"

And I said, "No, he's bringin' it in." Plus (which I don't mind going on the record) that Mert was from Detroit, and he'd been around pretty good. And he would get on me about all of our stars. "Why are you paying that man fifteen thousand dollars a week? He's only worth eight." And Mert would pay him eight, and he would give the stars seven thousand dollars under the table, which was kinda common in the old nightclub days, I guess. But anyway, that was Mert's way.

And it was so irritating 'cause I didn't want to say, "You're payin' 'em under the table." But he would catch me going through the lobby, and he'd give me a fifteen-minute lecture on the evils of paying fifteen thousand for a fifteen-thousand-dollar act when he supposedly could get it for eight, only he really couldn't. And I just couldn't bring myself to come out and say, "You're payin' under the table." But I would politely listen and then go about and do my own business. But it was sure irritating.

Then at least Louis Prima gave me a taste of the power of good entertainment, which an example is Frank Sinatra today. Just people will jam in to see him, and they have money and they come. It's just wonderful.

By summer, the South Shore Room was becoming established. And we could see the

stars were so important. That was it. You had a big star, the people came in; you had a bum star, they didn't. So we went after the big ones and didn't want to pay any more than we had to. Then part of it has become our reputation. Our policy is treating the stars extra-nice, and I guess that's my philosophy, that they are our guests; they're doin' us a favor. Like any big star doesn't have to work for us; they can work for the Sahara, or they can work for Harvey, or they can work for Del Webb or somebody. They're doin' us a favor by working. And most of them, they're really big or independently wealthy; they don't even have to work, plus the fact they just seem like good business plus I guess sometimes I am a nice person, and I put myself in the position of being a star. And I don't want to worry about anything; I want to go, I don't want to have to make a reservation. I would want a nice suite or a nice house on the Lake for me, which they get. And there's help to run the house or the suite; there's plenty of help to take care of whatever. And then a car to drive, a Rolls Royce or—we learned the Rolls Royce is kinda "show business," anyway. Some people don't want a Rolls Royce. About one out of ten, they want a Seville or something, which of course, they can have. And transportation up—like we'll send one of our jets to pick 'em up—and their family—and take 'em home after the engagement. And we don't charge 'em for anything—food or lodging or anything—except maybe

At first we didn't charge for anything, but we learned that was a big mistake, as we had Marlene Dietrich, and she called everybody all over the world. And her telephone bill was unbelievable, and so the second time around we told her that was over, that we'd stopped that policy, which we had. And she paid no attention and still called all over the world. And our operators didn't have nerve enough,

which you can't blame them for not allowing a call to go through. I think Marlene Dietrich still owes us nine hundred dollars or somethin'. But we do supply everything except things like that phone. A lot of stars do, do a lot of calling for business and other purposes. That's about the only thing we don't pay for, which has paid off because some of the stars—.

Some of the places pay more than we do, and sometimes they'll steal one of our stars, but the star never leaves without telling us. Then if they are offered more—like Red Skelton is a good friend of mine. I was the best man at his wedding. He opened our room at Tahoe. We're just real good friends. And he worked for us here and Tahoe, and then John Ascuaga got after him and offered him so much—and it was more than we pay a man of Red's drawing ability. He draws so much; he's not Frank Sinatra. He's down here [gesture] a little ways, and so he just wasn't worth that to us. And he'd go in every place; I go see him, da da da, "How are you?" And quite often he'll have dinner with me in my home. It is kinda fun because I have dinner with all the stars. Red works for John Ascuaga, but he comes to Reno, he has dinner with me. We've lost a few that way, but, you know, a thing's worth what it's worth. And it's real easy to tell with a star, just—first show, you can tell what you got.

But the show business end of it was a big new facet for us because of the pride. It had been Bingo, and then casino games and slot machines, and then into show business, which was really very educational and a lot of fun.

Which ones do you (besides Red Skelton) especially get along with? You've mentioned Frank Sinatra as being a good drawing card a number of times.

Well, Frank's okay. We're good friends, and he's been super nice to us. And I'll defend

Frank. I think that he's hot tempered and abuses his temper once in a while, but not too often, no more than a lot of people. But quite often it's people that pick on Frank, and many newspapers, and he takes so much, and then he stands up and yells. Our experience with Frank—I guess he's worked for us for five or six or eight times now—just a super nice fella, but he wants everything exactly so. Which I could identify with that, 'cause that's the way I like things—exactly so. And with Frank, we—we do that with everybody, but we make extra caution to be sure that everything is right, that the hotel suite is right and the temperature of this and that, microphones, and the orchestra, and so-and-so and so-and-so and so-and-so and so-and so. So Frank—and he just loves it! He doesn't have to yell, he doesn't have to scream; he comes in and—or like our G-2 picks him up somewhere and brings him in. The G-2's in perfect condition, and the Rolls Royce or Lincoln is in perfect condition. And he gets to his suite, and it's exactly the way it should be. And he goes on stage, and the microphone, everything, is just so-so-so-so, and it's his kind of thing. So he's happy to work for us, and we just get along fine. And we pay him much less than he's offered elsewhere, and he's happy with us and because we do things the way he wants them done.

I'll repeat what I said: tie's a little hot tempered (although I've never seen his temper), but I think looking back—and then whatever things have happened since I've known him—like the Australia thing down there, when he was down there (was in our plane down there) , and they got on him pretty good down there. And he did make one remark that wasn't taken too well, but the press were really buggin' him at the time, and I think any normal person would've reacted the same way. They were just insisting on this and that, and insisting on interviews right now

before he could even get off after a eighteen-hour trip, or sixteen-, or whatever it is, to get to get there. And you're tired, and dirty and wrinkled and all, and they demanded instant interviews. Boy! I'd take a little time and—you know. So I'll defend Frank. And sometimes he's wrong, but so far nine times out of ten—. And he was dead wrong on that thing at Cal-Neva and all that.* That was wrong; the rules were clearly spelled out. And there's certain kinds of people he couldn't have around, and he had 'em around. Well, he was wrong, Frank's okay.

But all of our stars I know, and know quite well. We have a regular policy where we have a dinner with them at their convenience; there's no "musts." I see the opening show, unless it's a complicated show; then I probably go the second night. Then I go down—"How do you do? Glad you're with us." Then the entertainment department feels them out on a dinner. Usually they will accept, and bring their wife or husband and their kids if they want to, and we have a nice dinner in Reno at my home or at Tahoe at the Villa, which is built for that purpose. And it's amazing how (it's happened I guess hundreds of times by now) the star will come in, and I will dread it; and I'll tell Verna, "Gee, I hate to go up there tonight."

And she said, "Boy do I! But we got to." And then you go up and they come in—and I'm sure they feel the same way. But you sit and have a drink and look at each other for two hours and tell stories back and forth and problems you've had in your life and the fun you've had, and Europe, and old cars, and new

*This refers to Sinatra's having lost his Nevada gaming license for entertaining a "Black Book" character at his casino, Cal-Neva.

cars, and airplanes, and Australia, on and on. And when you part, why, everyone seems to have had an excellent time; I know I always do, have a wonderful time. Then afterwards I think, "Why did I not want to do that? That was fun!"—you know. You get so much inside stuff, you know.

Another real good friend is Don Rickles, and his good friend is Bob Newhart. But Bob Newhart—that's an excellent example. He's an extremely funny man; his wife is just wonderful. And they're very close friends with Don Rickles and his wife, which you'd be surprised, they've been all over the world together. To get all them together and all, and back and forth; and it's just—it's fun.

I remember Don Rickles is—you've heard his reputation of insulting and all that. And he's insulting; in fact, his act sometimes a little rougher than we like. But he really—and at the end of his act he says, "Oh, we should all love each other," and da-da-da-da-da. But Don is really a likable fella when he's not on stage, although he's on stage all the time; he talks all the time. But he's very funny. And I remember when I first met him, which was really funny. I was going to a tailor in Beverly Hills. This man had a men's shop, and in the back was a tailor shop, and when you were in the tailor shop being fitted, you could see out the front to the regular shop, which is normal. So I was there one day, and I was finishing up. I knew he took care of Don Rickles, too. I was scared to meet Don, 'cause I heard he was insulting, so I never went to see his show anywhere. And I just didn't, I thought, "I don't want to be insulted," and so I didn't. Well, in walked Don, and he had the fitting right after me. And so I thought, "Oh, God, there's Don Rickles," And so I finished what I had to do, all I was doin', standin' there. So they finished the suit on me.

So then the tailor introduced me. He said, "Mr. Rickles" da da da. So Don was awfully nice.

So "Mr. Harrah, it's a pleasure."

And I thought, "Oh, brother," you know, "when do the things start?" So I left, and I went down the street to get my car, and I'd forgotten my briefcase. So I thought, "Oh, my God, I have to go back there." And I was gonna actually leave my briefcase, as I didn't want to go back, I was so scared. But, "Well, I have to" 'cause I needed it for the next place. So I just went back, and I walked in, and here the tailor is fitting Don.

And Don's really goin' like this [waving arms]. And I guess someone had said, "Bill Harrah's a millionaire," 'cause Don's answer when I walked in was "What do you mean Bill Harrah's a millionaire? He's a multimillionaire if there ever was one! Really!" And you know, "And one of the sweetest men in the world, and he knows how to treat his—" oh, just went on and on and on. And his back was to me, he's doin' all this, you know.

So then I went like this [claps hands and laughs], and he turned around; he was embarrassed, which I never thought I'd—! And he said, "Well, I mean it! I mean it!"

And I said, "Boy, that's really super!" So we're good friends. We get along okay. He has a real neat wife and two kids, and they're—he's just a guy, that's how he makes his livin'—he insults people. But he really is a nice man.

You've had a few that you didn't like so well I suspect.

Well, Marlene Dietrich charged those.

Seems to rue that Ethel Merman didn't do too well.

No. No, she did terrible business. And that disappointed me 'cause we tried to make

a deal, and—which any star, or I'd say—nine hundred and ninety-nine times out of a thousand the manager and-or the star will say, "See, since we're not doin' it, can we," [gesture, erasing] you know, "do somethin'?" And so we went to them; they didn't do a thing. Fifty people, or somethin'—just terrible.

And went to them—"What can we do?"

And "nothin'."

And we said, "Well, can't we call it off?"

"No."

"Well, can we cut the money down?" (And she was top number at the time.)

"Oh, no, we want the money."

So then that irritated me 'cause they wouldn't compromise an inch. So we closed her out and paid—we had to pay her, of course. But we just closed the show, 'cause it was just zero. That's, I think, the only show we ever closed. Maybe we might've closed not that big of name but—. I was an admirer of hers 'cause she's done so many great shows and all, but apparently word hadn't got around to west coast or something. And then her show wasn't too good; it was a lot of old stuff, nothin' new. It just wasn't a very good show.

Lawrence Welk makes it pretty well on old stuff.

Yeah, well, his music is good; plus every show there's a new number just written last week. He's a smart man. He keeps right on top. A lot of people needle him, but, I think down in their—well, it's 50 funny, a lot of people—"You know Lawrence Welk? You know da da da?"

And maybe, "Yeah, awful! I'd never listen to his show." And then the next breath, they'll say, "Well, last week so-and-so when they did this and that—." So they do watch his show. They don't think it's "cool" to watch Lawrence Welk. He's a great musician, I guess; plus, a showman. And he juggles the—I watch

his show every week just because I—well, I know all the stars now on a first name basis, as I think sixteen years they've been coming up there, and a lot of the originals are there. So you know, sixteen times you get to know people pretty good maybe. But we always have a dinner for 'em.

But he also, like some of 'em aren't too good, he puts em down a little; he don't fire 'em. And here comes a new star, you know; so he keeps—he does it real good.

Seems to me he really packs them in for you about as much as anybody, doesn't he?

Yeah, he does. We have guys in our organization that just don't think Lawrence is too cool, but he fills the room. You know, maybe one second show, instead of nine hundred there might be eight hundred or something, but it's real good. And he doesn't get as much as some where he gets paid pretty good, but it's—. And of course, there's a lot of expense with it; those forty people, and we have a lot of—. But we still just do fine. And it's a crowd pleaser, and this certain class of people that just loves Lawrence Welk. They come up—and they're not all little old ladies with tennis shoes; there's some good ones. It's fine. We're real happy with it.

Every year we have a dinner, and they're all there. In fact, the room where we have dinner was built for him when we built the place. And they said, "How big do you want the room?" And he has forty. And I said, "Well, Lawrence Welk has forty; and all the gals and guys are married or got boys and girlfriends, so that's eighty; plus some Harrah's people, plus some Welk executives, is a hundred people," which is exactly right. And so we fill the room every year.

We get done, and Lawrence Welk makes a little speech, how happy he is to be back

again. And I make a little speech that I'm so happy that they're back and that we're friends sixteen years. And then I always say at the end that they're renewed for next year, which they—"Olay!" But I don't know what will happen if and when they're not. But they're goin' so good. And although Welk's seventy-three, I think they'll at least last his lifetime. And then when he's gone, of course, it'll be a new ball game. I don't think it'll work any more. He's got some super stars, though.

Like he has that new (well, not new; he's been there about five years now)—that young coronet, I call it, that trumpeter (whatever it is)—does super solos. (I think his last name begins with a z, like Zill or Ziss, or something.) Big, heavy, but he's very young; he's in his twenties, and plays the most beautiful I ever heard. He always has a solo on the show lately; he's just the last five years. But [Welk] hasn't fired anybody; he moves 'em around a little bit. (I think it's Zill is his name.)

Are you really good friends with Sammy Davis?

[Sammy Davis is] good—real good friend for years. I admire him tremendously. And he started, you know—no education, nothin', and just—he did it himself. And he has a vocabulary a lot bigger than some of your university people. And he knows the meaning and pronounces it just—I feel like a tongue-tied oaf around Sammy. And it's not show-off with him; it's just something, he wanted to learn the words, and he's learned them. And of course, he's a super entertainer and singer and dancer. The story I like to tell on him is, he can do any thing—play the xylophone—.

And he's a car freak. And we must have sold him or given him twenty or thirty cars, most of which he bought, but we gave him one or two. He always wants the very latest thing. And he can't shift gears. He has to have

an automatic transmission, which I just can't believe, because he can do anything! Person can play the drums or something; all you have to do to shift gears is move your arm and move your leg and push the clutch in And he can't do it! No way!

So one year we gave him a Duesenberg, a replica Duesenberg. It looks exactly like a 1935 Duesenberg Speedster. And it's done very well; this firm in L.A. makes them. They're quite expensive; they look exactly like a '35 Duesenberg, but they have a Chrysler engine and an automatic transmission.

So we took it to the Lake—we got Sammy one and took it to the Lake and had a license plate "Sammy" put on it. Had it parked out in back. And then I went to the show, and it was a surprise. He had a Maserati; he wanted a Ferrari but you couldn't get a Ferrari with a automatic transmission. So he got a Maserati, which you can get with an automatic. So he sent his Maserati up 'cause it was—they're not too good a car, really, 'cause—('course, I sell Ferraris, so I can knock 'em a little bit). They're not really too good and then his was run down; it needed paint and this and that. So we told Sammy, "Okay, we'll pick up your Maserati, and then when you come up in June, you can get it."

"Okay, fine."

Which we did. We got his Maserati, and we cleaned it up and painted it and all. But we used that as an excuse to give Sammy the Duesenberg 'cause we didn't want to pull it on stage. That was a little too much. But we had the Duesenberg parked out in back. And of course, he got up there, and he said, "Where's my Maserati?" The Duesenberg wasn't there for about a week; so we had to stall him, which he got real suspicious because we always did everything exactly right. And "Where's my Maserati?"

"Well, the paint isn't done yet."

"Well, you've had it for two months." And the way we—you know, he couldn't understand why we didn't have it painted. And so we had some story where this painter had got drunk, and he'd mixed the wrong paint, and we'd fired him; oh, we had a good story!

He wanted his Maserati, he wanted his Maserati, he wanted his Maserati. And so finally then we got the Duesenberg up there. And then I went to the show. And so I—big grin—"Gee, Sammy, that was a wonderful show," da da da. And sit down; everybody meets everybody. And then I said, "Oh, hey! Come here, I want to show you somethin'." And I started to lead him out.

And he said, "Wh-where are we goin'?"

I said, "Well, I want to take you out in back and show you your Maserati."

And he said, "See my Maserati? I've seen it! I—" you know. He didn't want to go.

I said, "Oh, come on."

And he said, "No, no—."

I said, "Well, gee whiz, Sammy. We really put a super have a lot of fun. They're good people, real good people— real good.

[Jim Nabors is] a good friend. We go to Indianapolis every year—Jim Nabors and I, and his manager. And that just came about—I have gone to the Indianapolis race for, well, since '56—twenty years. And I'll get the same seats and everything, and the same—I stay at the Speedway Motel because I was a pretty good friend of Tony Hulman because I am such a car freak. They would have a star every year (they still have a lot of stars around there), but they would have a star sing "Back Home in Indiana" just before the race. Every year it was a different star. So one year they invited Jim Nabors. And Jim was working for us, so I knew about it, and so I said, "Well, hey! We got our plane. Why don't you ride back with us?"—which he did, Jim and his manager,

and my gang. And we went back, and we had a wonderful time. And Jim and I stay at the Speedway Motel. That's very difficult to get in 'cause there's only two hundred rooms, so the race drivers and car owners stay there. And it's so handy 'cause the day of the race you just get out of your room and walk over and watch the race, or otherwise you have to get a cab or a limo or a whatever—a bus— and come from downtown. And we were good friends with Jim, anyway, so it just worked so good.

And Jim sat with us in the stand. Then just before that, why, he went down—excused himself and went down—and sang "Back Home in Indiana" for four hundred thousand people, which I thought—I said, "How can you do that?" You know, just that I'd die in my—. And sang it beautifully. Then he came back and watched the race, so it worked good. So I said, "Hey, that was fun! Let's do it again next year."

And they always changed, so Jim's manager approached the Speedway people and said, "Well, Jim and we are good friends of Harrah, and we ride back in his plane. It works out real good, and Jim loves doin' it, and we'll do it again next year," (and I guess the money was nothing) "if you want us to."

And they said, "Gee, that's fine." So it's been about five years now, or six years. We all go back on a regular routine. We know exactly what's gonna—have the same chauffeur, and the whole thing. And Jim's goin' back again this year with us. He's a real nice guy.

He invited me—Verna and I—down to the Mardi Gras one year in New Orleans. He was the king of the Mardi Gras one year, and then the following year he went back. He has some good friends, so—. People from that area, they have a nice penthouse down there. We stayed at a hotel, but we went to the penthouse, and the parade goes right by and that goes all day.

It was fun. It was the way to go to the Mardi Gras if you have to go. Jim goes every year, but once was enough for us. It's, you know—everybody's kinda drunk; and it's fun, but it's just—.

Jim is a real generous fella. He had a party for me about three years ago. And he kept it a secret; it leaked out beforehand, but he worked on it real—he works—he gets interested in somethin'—he just works his fanny off. It was in December when at that time our room was closed, and he picked December because he figured nobody'd be working. He invited every single star that had ever appeared at Harrah's, and most of 'em showed up. There were a hundred people or so at the party at his home in Beverly Hills or that area. We have some pictures; just you name—Sammy Davis was there, and Carol Burnett was there, and just on and on. They were all there, and that was very flattering. The way it started out, it was just "Come down and have dinner with me in December."

And "Okay, fine." And then, "Well," I said, "well, next time I'm down." Well, no, he wanted me to come in December. "Okay, I'll come." Well, he had a new house. Okay, that's a good reason.

But then it was set for Saturday, such and such. And then somethin' came up, and I said, "Well, I want to change it to Friday."

"No, no, no!" 'cause all these others—and there were people that were, you know—actually came out from Texas; they were working and came out for the one day just to show up, so he insisted it was that day.

And I—"Okay." And then we talked; and 'course, my entertainment director—our entertainment director—was in on the thing with Jim. So I said, "Well, how come?" you know, "What's the difference—one day?"

And he said, "Well, gee, you know how Jim is. And he's worked on—his mother's worked,

and they just got it all set for this day, and we really should go, Bill. We really should."

And I—"Okay, okay."

But anyway, it was a fun party.

GOVERNMENT AND OTHER PROBLEMS AT TAHOE

Would you discuss problems with the environmentalists at the Lake?

Well, we didn't do it the way we did it because of the TRPA or anything; we did it because that's the way we like to do things—to do them nicely. What was the name of that first organization up there? [The Lake Tahoe Area Council] I was in that. I was a member of that. I went to the meetings, and I was quite active. I remember I went to a lot of meetings, and I went along—they had some pretty good thinking, or I thought they did, and when I didn't agree with them, I told 'em. And the reason I got off of it, it just took more time than I could spare. And I'm sure we kept our membership, and we had someone on there. But I had respect for that. And of course, later, it got turned around, and I've almost lost track of how many organizations there are up there and who's pullin' which way and all that. I really don't bug myself with it.

We don't believe the Lake should remain like it was in 1910, and we believe in orderly development, but we sure don't believe in a hundred million condominiums around the Lake where every inch—and you can't even see the water. That's ridiculous. It should be developed properly. I think the Lake is not nearly as bad as people represent, or some people represent it to be. I'm quite familiar with the Lake, south end, of course, but I go to the north end periodically. And we have boats, and we go around the Lake several times a year. I deliberately will—at least once

I go around and look at it just close offshore. Then when we have guests, why, we'll do it again if they're interested. So I do see the Lake a lot, and I'm not ashamed of it. The only thing I don't like about the Lake is the kinda hodgepodge development at Stateline in California, which they want to blame on the casinos, which of course, if the casinos hadn't been there, all those little motels wouldn't have popped up. But still California could've—and whether it was the county or state, that's their problem—could've had more orderly development there; there's no question about that. So anything that's ugly at Tahoe is in California, and it's their own darn fault. And of course, the casinos brought people there. So what? And what's wrong with goin' to Tahoe and pullin' a slot machine? You can also go water-skiing and snow-skiing and fishing and skin diving—why, it has everything. I'm rather proud of what we've done at Tahoe because it could've been about ten times worse or a hundred times worse.

How do you deal with all of these overlapping segments of government?

Well, you do what you have to do. The company's large enough now that we're departmentalized. And like our PR man (and he should have a whole bunch of titles), at Lake Tahoe it's John Giannotti, who's done a super job in keeping on top of things and observing what's going on. And then we listen to him—of course, we make our own decisions—but we listen to him; and then wherever there's a problem, why, we delegate it to whoever should handle it, whether it's legal or political or whatever. But we really watch it up there.

What are Mr. Giannotti's general instructions?

Oh, I don't really know that. He's also our lobbyist, I guess (we don't like the word, but—). When the legislature's in session, he just lives in Carson City; and the rest of the time he's at Tahoe. Very personable man and just right on top of things, and just super. But the lobbying and all that kinda goes together, you know. But he has his ear to the ground, and he's very aware of what's going on in the state and in the legislature and politically and at Tahoe and also California. Because we are on the line, why, we're very familiar with, like Eugene Chappie, the assemblyman from that county up there. And Gene is a fine man. He's right straight down the middle, just what's good for everybody. 'course, he has a cross to bear, some of the things that come out of California, but he stands right up to them and tells 'em what's good for his county. Gene's a fine man.

Right now he has a bill in the California legislature to make a single agency responsible at Tahoe, a single layer of government. Have you been supporting that?

Oh yeah, of course.

Or did you help him with it?

Oh, I don't know about that, but I would speculate that we had. You know he doesn't work for us at all. You know [in] your life, you've seen people that just identify with you. You think straight, and they think straight, too; and Gene's always been that way—just super.

I just wondered if you couldn't begin with the Lake Tahoe Area Council and characterize some of the people who were on there.

Well, Joe McDonald to me was "Mr. Negative." And I don't know, I don't think he

liked gambling too much but, Joe McDonald to me was just bad news. Well, not that strong, but just negative. Whenever Joe McDonald was around or connected with anything, I knew that Harrah's wasn't gonna get any slaps on the back, 'cause we really had to pay attention to what we were doing. And in the Area Council I was there, and many meetings, and Joe was leaving Harrah's out of it. He was just kind of a negative guy—just sit there, and a sourpuss, and like he hated the world, and that the newspaper men were—which he didn't say, but he gave me the impression that they were kind of—a little higher level than the rest of us or something, and just bad news.

But Summerfield is entirely different. He was a wonderful man, and the type that I like—you can talk—two and two is four, and four and four is eight, and just go right down the road, and no big cross to bear or fire to fight or something.

And of course, Ivan Sack, you and I both know what a super man he is. Although he worked for the Forest Service for thirty years, if he thinks a rule of theirs is wrong, he'll speak right up and say so. He is for orderly development and to especially come out in Idaho with me; we use him up there on a retainer basis, and we had to almost chop his head off to get him to accept the retainer. And he must make twenty-five cents an hour for the time he spends up there, and he's right straight down the line. We want to develop something, why here's how you do it. And when we're wrong, he says so. And of course, we think alike; we like to do things attractive and beautiful and open space and not a bunch of horrible yellow signs and things. So Ivan just believes in the outdoors, the great outdoors, but he also believes a man should use it and that it all shouldn't be just backwoods. People should be able to drive a

car or ride a horse or do something into the mountains.

I remember McClatchy was on there for a short time. And it's the first time I've mentioned him. I don't remember which first name he had; he was quite young, younger than me, which was fifteen years ago. McClatchy Newspapers. I think the Sacramento Bee hadn't been too friendly to casinos, so I had a in-built dislike for the name McClatchy. And then I met him, and it was totally erased. And he wasn't puttin' me on. He hadn't gone out of his way to cater to me; he was just a straight guy. And that was super. That was another nice thing about, well, any organization you join or that I've ever joined—I find that I meet people that I wouldn't otherwise meet, and my preconceived notions are quite often totally wrong; so there's somethin' good in organizations.

There was the Nevada-California Interstate Compact. Some of the Nevada members on that were Fred Settelmeyer and Hugh Shamberger.

Yeah. Yeah, I knew Fred forever, of course—Douglas County—I remember was our Senator for a while. Real classy guy, and I know his [sister] very well. I've been to their homes. And Fred was a conservative, which most Douglas Countyites are. But he was all right. You might have to nudge him a little, but Fred was—he sure meant well.

Did I ever tell you my story about the Douglas County Republicans? Well, see, Douglas County—I don't know if it still is, but was the one Republican county in the state. And that intrigued me, and when I first went up there, it was quite strong. I think now it's about even, or maybe it's gone, but—. I asked Mr. [Willard] Park why, and he didn't know. And I asked many of 'em—every old-timer I met, I asked them why Douglas County

was Republican. And I forget—maybe it was Mr. Park, or it was Settlemeyer. But I asked him, and I'd finally pin him, "Why is Douglas County Republican?"

And the only answer I ever got that meant anything at all was "It always has been" [laughing].

And I would say, "I know, I know, I know!"

You practically support Douglas County. Do you feel that they treat you right or fairly?

Oh, they did, they did. And then we were worried about— because the control is in the lower part of the county. And we were afraid if and when they got a bunch of supervisors, when we got two down there, why, we'd have bad news. And we have two down there, and there is some bad news. And almost— well, I was gonna say almost like the federal government—pick, pick, pick. But it's not nearly that bad; but compared to what it was, where it was one of the easiest counties to get anything done and no big mess and just do it and go down, and there was the judge, or there was the county clerk, and you could go to Minden and get a ton done in about an hour and a half. And now everything's complicated and this and that, and they want an airport here, or they don't want an airport there, and oh boy, on and on and on, just—. But it's typical of the country and the world, just—you know—let's don't keep things simple; let's complicate it. And it has changed for the worse, I think. But of course, Giannotti could answer that [clicks] like that. It's a fun county, though.

Well, I remember when we opened up there and that's when we weren't as large as we are, so I was down there a lot. And we needed a license or something, I'd go down and get it, pay em the money. You know, I've been a car guy all my life, and also I like special

license plates, which I had. And the state of Nevada, when they only had one number, I finagled around and finally got Number Eight, which I had for years, which I was very proud of. And then when they went to counties I finagled around and got W-8—or I got W-8 automatically, and I got W-1 by a lot of maneuvering. And in Douglas County I got VS-B, and DS-1 was held by the county clerk. And I thought, "Gee, how am I gonna get that?" But he'd had it since it'd been issued, and he'd had it before (I forget). So I thought, "Gee whiz," (and I wish I could remember his name).

But he had Number DS-1. He was so super, and he was a real quiet man, and I didn't know how to approach him. But finally I just—like I guess you should do in life—when you can't figure a way, just go do it. So I did. I said, "Gee, I—DS-1—you've had it forever," da da da da da.

And he said, "Oh, do you want that?"

And I said, "Oh, you'll—gee," da da da.

"Well, here. Here you are."

And I said, "Well, how—?"

He said, "Oh, I've had it for years, and the only reason I took it was nobody wanted it at the time. So I just took it." But he said, "Do you want—here you are," just like that.

Maybe you'd like to discuss the special problems involved in dealing with severe weather up there.

Well, to keep the people coming, we started our buses (I think I covered that). So that took care of the customers. And then the old highway departments, Nevada and California, did a super job. So the weather's never been a big problem. I know on our own property we have our own snow removal equipment (we've gone into that). And when we have had heavy snows, we—which we had

to learn the hard way, of course—but I think one year we learned, and now we have trucks and loaders and all. Occasionally, every few years, the snow will come faster than you could—. And we will plow it and load in the trucks and take it somewhere and dump it, it's just no problem any more. It's fine.

But Douglas County—getting back to the operating there, it's very pleasant to operate in the county only. As you know, here we have the overlap, which is the city, and da-da-da, dada-da. And when it's just county, why, you get your county license and talk to the county commissioners or the sheriff or whatever, and that's it. So it's—life's much simpler with—'course, which is pleasant.

You mentioned the sheriff of Douglas County. They've had a lot of problems with their sheriffs. Has it made a problem in enforcement up there for you?

No. The only problem we've had is having enough deputies at the right time, which really hasn't been too bad. And I think on occasion, like the Fourth of July up there is just unbelievable. And I think a year or two they didn't have the deputies. Then when we growled a little, they had them up there. And now I think we have a setup somehow where our people, our security people, can plan ahead with them. And we're gonna need forty fellas up here, something, on the Fourth of July, and Douglas County will have ten, maybe, or whatever. And then I think our security is authorized (or can be authorized) to handle traffic problems up there occasionally. I think we work fine with them now, and generally, it's been real good. Like in the early days, I know, I was up there, and many times, I would go up—and a lot of traffic. And I was very pleased to see one or two deputies up there directing traffic, which

we hadn't asked for; they were just there. And that's when maybe they only had one deputy up there. So it's been quite good.

You have a different class of customers at Tahoe from what you have in Reno, isn't that right?

Oh, maybe a little—not too much. We have a lot more bus customers there, which, of course, are the lower income. And we have more so-called high rollers. The reason for that is our hotel is bigger, and our Shore Room is bigger, and it's just a more elite operation; so it—you know—figures. If we had a hotel like that in Reno, and if we ran the buses to Reno that we run to Tahoe, why, they'd be identical, I'd say, probably.

Any of the famous high rollers that you'd like to describe?

No, not really. Of course, our bankroll got bigger; and then when it gets bigger, you don't worry so much. But we've had some big games, win or lose a hundred thousand dollars, but I don't remember any offhand that—outstanding. People come, and they have streaks, and they will beat you sometimes for time after time—you wonder what's goin' on. And there are some players that hardly ever win that well, they have a self-defeating attitude. I mean, they know how to play Craps or whatever. You put the bet there and you double it down and so on—they know all of that. But the problem is, they really don't know when to quit. They have fifty, they want a hundred, and they get a hundred, they want a hundred and fifty. And of course, that just can't happen, so—. There aren't too many of those, but there are a few that just don't seem to ever want to quit.

But I think we have our share of good customers. We have fewer than most places

because we're very restrictive on our credit. Some places would (and I think some possibly still do)—will give credit without checking too closely. And we check closely, and if their credit isn't good, we just don't give 'em any. Why waste our time, why waste their time, and have a whole bunch of markers that aren't any good, and people chasm' around the country tryin' to collect 'em—that's dumb. We don't want to distress anybody, anyway. If they can't afford, or they don't want to bring the money, why, poohy, they don't have to play. If a person doesn't want to gamble, that's fine with us.

And they can come to our show, too, if they want to; they may not have the best seat in the house, which is an old-time complaint. That is kind of an in-house thing, that people want, like a Frank Sinatra show, which is very difficult to get in. And the reason it was difficult to get in, he usually only works a week. So that's maybe eighteen hundred seats a day times seven is twelve thousand-plus seats a week. And we'll have almost enough good customers to fill that. And people that aren't players—and they'll call in and—"Oh, I called in, and the house was sold out. How do I get to see Frank Sinatra?" And we have little things, we've passed 'em, that the shows that are difficult to get in are restricted to our good customers; we're in the gambling business. And I've had, why, I actually had—this is a true story. Once I had a man stop me in the casino at Tahoe. "Mr. Harrah," (he wasn't drunk, so I listened to him, but he was a little irate) "and how do I get in to see the show?"

And I said, "Well, did you ask over at the—"

"Oh, no, I can't get in—it's full."

And I said, "Well, did you ask the pit boss?"

And he said, "No. Why?"

And I said, "Well, are you a customer?"

And he said, "Well, I'm here."

I said, "Well, no, do you play?"

"Well, no."

And I said, "Okay, give me twenty dollars," which he did. And I took him over to the table, and it was—kind of room there. There's a pit boss standing there, so I said, "What's your name?"

Said, "Joe Blow."

And, "Okay, Fred, this is Joe Blow. He's a new customer of ours. Take care of him!" [He] put the twenty-dollar bill on the line and just stood there—and I don't remember if he won the bet or not.

And he said, "Well," bla bla bla.

I said, "Now you're a customer!"

And he said, "Well, you want me to lose my—" (I think something like that).

I said, "I don't care if you even win ten thousand dollars!" But I said, "Give us a chance!" And I said, "That's what the show's all about."

But people don't want to—they know that, but they won't accept it. And they'll say, "Oh, I called in and the line was busy, and then I called back and the showroom was full," da da da. And all they have to—and we put up little things which we have printed that tells you how. And it says, "Get acquainted with your floor supervisor," and you get acquainted with him by being a customer. And you can be a slot customer—play it, you know, and "Oh, hello, Mrs.—"

"Hi, nice to see you again."

"Gee whiz, I've got some friends comin', we'd like to get—"

"Yeah, sure! How many? What—" you know. It's so simple, but they don't want to—you know. Some of 'em want to come and eat, which is fine if we have room. But if we don't have room, the customers—the players—come first. It's so simple, but some people don't want to hear it.

On the other hand, the golden-agers will take a bus load up to see Lawrence Welk.

Oh yeah. Well, they're players! Sure! Those bus people are fine, you know. No, we knew. But I just—there are people that'll actually go in, eat and not put a nickel in, and even brag about or somethin'—"Oh, I never play the games," you know?—which was okay; we don't want 'em to play if they don't want to. But then don't expect the favors of the players; it's just so simple. And they don't get too much, which is okay. But the whole picture, you know—Sinatra isn't there because of the money we're payin' him. I mean we're h i m that, but we have to get it back, and we sure don't make it off of the steaks, I'll guarantee you that.

ADVENTURES IN IDAHO

Tell me about how you got interested in the Salmon River and what made you finally decide to start buying property in the area and what uses you've made of it.

I should explain why I went to Idaho 'cause it all ties in. When we opened (and I may have told you some of this)—when we opened the casino here in 1946, it was a big strain for me financially, plus I'd never been in the casino business before. So it was workin', really hours, and worrying and planning and financial problems, and I drank at the time anyway. So I was drinking very heavily and getting up and working and working and drinking, working, drinking, and—.

So we finally got open—we got open on schedule—June twentieth (I think), '46. And there were problems and, you know, to this, that, and the other thing. So finally we started—we got it pretty well straightened out; that was about August. And I was like this [shakes] actually, and I was, what, thirty-five years old.

So I went—I was like that—just, you know—which I'd never done. And so I went to

Dr. Cantlon (Dr. Vernon Cantlon)—I didn't tell you that story?

I went to him, and I said, "Gimme a pill, Doc—look at that" [shakes hand] you know.

And he said, "I can cure that."

And I said, "Yeah, fine."

And he said, "Will you do what I tell you to do?"

And I said, "Of course."

And he said, "Okay." He said, "I want to make it real clear—will you do what I'm gonna tell you to do?"

I said, "Absolutely!"

He said, "Okay, go fishing." [Laughs]

And I said, "That's the craziest thing I ever heard! haven't been fishing since I was a kid! What a waste of time," da da da da da da.

And he said, "What did you say? Now you just said you'd do what I told you to do."

I said, "Okay, okay, okay."

So that's when I had my twelve-cylinder Packard convertible that I just loved. So I went out and bought a trailer, and my girlfriend and I, we took off. And I had no idea where I was goin'. And I went east and got to Wells, I

guess, and then I went north and got to Twin Falls. And no reason—I was just ridin' along. And there was a man there that made our neon signs, Mel (somethin') [Cosgriff], who was quite a drinkin' guy. And (Bob Ring'll have his name if you want to get it) so I went to see Mel, and I—"Oh, hi, Dill. What are you doing here?"—da da da. "Have a drink." So we had a drink.

And I said, "I'm goin' fishin'."

And he said, "Well, where are you goin'?"

And I said, "I don't know! Where can I catch a fish?"

And he said, "Damn if I know," but he said, "I have a guy that works on the signs that goes fishin', catches great big salmon. Let me go ask him." So he come back, and he said, "He goes to Stanley."

And so, "Where's Stanley?" So we got out a map, and I found Stanley.

So then I went to Stanley, and then I enjoyed it there; that's another story. But then getting acquainted there—it was the following year, I had a friend I made there, Archie Danner, who lived there, and he just recently died. But he had a little motel thing there. I didn't stay there; I had my trailer. But we got to be friends. And he was quite a hunter and fisherman, and he'd talked me into goin' huntin'; I didn't like to go huntin', but he talked me into it. And he talked me into going into the Middle Fork, and just on horses. And so we had this pack string—we weren't hunting or anything; we were just lookin'. And that was one of the most enjoyable trips of my life. We got our horses and a real good packer, Bill Sullivan; and we went in for about a week, and we were having so much fun I think we stayed nearly two weeks. Fact, we had to use the Forest Service telephone to call out to get more supplies. We ran out of—we had plenty of meat 'cause they killed deer, and—oh, I know what it was! Oh, that's the funniest

thing. We took an awful lot of liquor 'cause we were drinkin', so we had a whole mule full of liquor [chuckling]! And the other food didn't matter, you know; we could get deer and all, and there's always hotcakes and stuff. But we all smoked, and so we ran out of cigarettes. And I'll never forget that—I smoked Luckies. So I ran out, and I was a little shocked. So one of the guys on the trip smoked Camels, I remember. So I—doin' this [pats pocket]—"Gee, I haven't got any Luckies."

And he said, "Here, have a Camel."

And I said, "No way! That's the dumbest cigarette there is." So then about an hour later I said, "Still got those Camels?" [Laughing]

So then we all ran out in about a—I'm smokin' Camels or whatever. And then a day later we all ran out. And so then it was a decision—and it was real simple. We sent ol' Bill Sullivan—he was the packer—we called out on the Forest Service phone, had somebody bring some cigarettes in, and some other stuff. But where they could bring 'em in was, I think, twenty miles up the river. And ol' Bill, who's still alive—he's a good friend of mine. He's quite a real outdoorsman. He took one of his best horses and went up the river twenty miles and brought the stuff—the supplies—and come back the same day, which is unbelievable.

But anyway, while we were in there, we were goin' along the river, and you know, campin' out. But we came to this one place which is the Middle Fork Lodge—it was called the Middle Fork Lodge—and we had lunch there. And there was a lady (I still know her), Mrs. Guth—husband was Bill Guth, and he's still alive, too; he moved around. She actually ran the place. And so we stopped there. "Could we have lunch?"

"Oh, sure you can have lunch." And so she—these sandwiches with big, thick homemade bread, and it was so wonderful.

And I was impressed with the place. It was terribly run-down, but I thought, “Oh boy, what—” you know. But I didn’t have money in those days. It wasn’t even thinkable to have anything like that. But I looked it all over and just— “Oooh! This is beautiful.”

So then later, maybe five or ten years or whenever, it became available. And at the time the man was tryin’ to sell it to me, and he started describing it to me, and I said, “I know every inch of that place.” And we made a good deal on it at the time. And we fixed it all up, of course, and fixed it up nice. We didn’t put any chrome or any tin roofs or anything; it’s all done very well—rustic and so on.

I think we can handle thirty guests at a time—that’s everything full. And we have a swimming pool—swimming pool was there. In fact, the man that built the swimming pool— he was a previous owner—Rex Lanham. I bought it from Rex; that’s right. Rex had a partner—he’s a real good friend of ours. He’s an old Idaho guy that started with nothin’ and then owned—just very successful—a good all-around guy. And he owned it, and he sold it to us. The swimming pool, it’s a beautiful, a hundred-foot swimming pool and wide, and there’s natural hot water there. And it’s not sulfur water; it’s just plain, natural hot water. In fact, we heat the lodge, and the faucet in the bathroom is hot water right out of the mountain.

But I said, “How did you ever build that swimming pool?”

He has a lot of airplanes; he’s quite a pilot. But he had this little Super Cub that he had built to haul stuff (‘cause he has another place up there)—haul material. I think he could haul in two sacks of cement at a time, and it took five or six hundred sacks [chuckles]. But he said, “Figure it out yourself how many trips it took!”

Anyway, I’d say it’s very popular, of course. It’s natural hot water.

Then we’re on a creek there, Thomas Creek. They had a little nothin’ power plant there. So we put in quite a sophisticated hydroelectric plant. And in about, oh, two or three months in the spring and a few months in the fall (I forget exactly when it is, but I’d say maybe five months of the year) we can run on our hydroelectric. There’s enough water in the thing—the creek—to run just about everything on the place. We have a lot of things going at six o’clock at night when everybody’s got their lights on. And then we have a diesel that we use otherwise.

A story I like to tell is when the hydroelectric’s working, we get free electricity, and with the hot water comin’ out of the hill, we get free hot water, so it’s really, really nice.

That’s owned by the Company. And it’s used—because of Internal Revenue and all, why, it has to be “purely business” and so on; so I don’t go there as much as I used to, but that’s “life.”

But in Stanley, that’s my separate property. And, of course, that’s business, too, but I have a lot more reasons to go to Stanley—because there’s a business there, and I own it, so I go there to look at it. Stanley, where I first went and loved, fishin’ didn’t amount to much, but bein’ there was a lot of fun. And I was still drinkin’, but I went out by a little stream, and I bought a fishin’ pole and so on and I tried it. And then I got in with some guys that knew how to fish, and I got to feelin’ so good real fast, because even though I was still drinkin’, I was eating good, and you can’t help walking, you know, and I had a big pot [pats abdomen] on me and I lost it right away. But I went to stay I think a week or—that’s right, a week—and I stayed six weeks. And I would call in, you know; they had a phone there in Stanley. And I’d call in about every day, and business

was just fine. In fact, that's always kinda—it's nice if you own a place and business gets better, but still, if you're not there, you think, "Well—" [chuckles] it's good and it's bad! But anyway, I came back, and I was just fine. But I fell in love with the place.

And so I went back—in fact, I went back that year. I met this Archie, and he talked me into comin' back for hunting season (which was October), which I went back for, which I didn't enjoy—I enjoyed bein' there, but I didn't enjoy the hunting. I think either then (that was '46) or '47, this little cabin was for sale. And it was a cabin and the lot for twelve hundred dollars. It was a little log cabin—I think about an eighty-foot lot. And it had no—well, there was no electricity in the town; it had a little light plant and no plumbing. It had the outhouse. But I bought it, and I loved it and started fixing it up right away. And then bought the lot next door and the lot next door and the lot next door and the lot next and the lot next door and the lot next door. And added on the cabin and added on the cabin again. And then my present wife—we made a big addition because of my three boys, and that's kind of their wing. They each have a bedroom and a playroom. So now it's quite an extensive place. And it's a very beautiful place. And garages, and places for the snow machines, and places for the bicycles and motorcycles, and on and on. And a beautiful lawn and a guest cabin. And people look at it, you know, and they—"Wow! What a place for Stanley!"

And I'd say, "Yeah, it started with a twelve-hundred-dollar cabin.

But then I wasn't interested in goin' into business there at all, 'cause that was where I relaxed; that was my play place. And I knew everybody in town. I've been goin' there so long that now I'm an old-timer up there. I know everybody in there, and knew a lot of 'em when they were kids, you know; I've seen

'em grow up, and now they're the owners of the businesses and so on. So I'm a real old-timer.

SO I didn't want to be in business, but there was a piece of property adjoining mine, one little piece I didn't have—and that always bugs me if I don't have it. It was a garage here, and I'd known the owner of the garage. He was a nice old guy. And he died, and it went here and there, and it was an old stone building, you know—beautiful building. And so it'd been kicked around and all, and it became for sale, and I thought, "What the heck, I'll buy that thing!" So I bought it and started to run the gas station.

Then I got interested in it—the gas station and the repair shop and so on—and we ran that. And then, it was no trouble; I just had a guy runnin' it and it was fun. I'd go over and, "Hey, what's goin' on?" And it was a place—you know, it was fun.

So then there was about three restaurants there, and some of 'em, most of 'em, closed in the winter. But there was one, this old hotel there, and it had been closed for years; it was open when I got there, and it closed. It was doing very poorly, and it closed. And then it was closed for years.

The fishing guide at the Middle Fork, a Bob Cole (who's another story)—. Bob's father (who was a wonderful old man) was retired. And then he kinda liked the country; they were both from Twin Falls. He liked the country, and so he and his wife bought this old hotel. And I remember when they bought it, and I thought, "Boy that's dumb. That place hasn't been any good in years." And it was run-down, the windows broken and all, you know. And it had about four or five rooms upstairs and one bathroom and pretty good lobby and pretty good, small dining room. But they bought it—the two of 'em—and they were both in their sixties or older. They

worked real hard and cleaned it all up and opened it up and had wonderful food, and it was a good place to eat. And so we all started eating there, and they'd rent a room once in a while. And they had no nut," just the two of 'em. I think they paid twenty thousand dollars for it or so. In a couple of years, Bob kept tellin' me how they were doin'; I think they'd paid for it, and they had twenty or thirty thousand dollars out of it.

They were getting old, and Bob's son, Steve, got married, and he was workin' around there. So the old folks sold it to Steve, which was a surprise 'cause he was in his early twenties. Where he got any money—but then Bob got in the deal, and it was a family thing. But they had a price on it and all.

So Steve and Kathy had it, and they were young kids in their twenties. And they worked real hard. And we thought, "Well, the food isn't gonna be as good because the kids—what do they know?" And the food was as good, or it was better. So— "Oh boy, isn't that wonderful?" And, "We have a nice restaurant in Stanley," and they were open all year, and, "Oh boy!"

And so that went on for a couple of years. And we didn't go out to eat; we had a nice kitchen, but we liked to go out to lunch quite often and dinner maybe once or twice a week. So one night, we'd eaten at home three or four nights, and it was Friday night. So we liked to call up—they were so busy. So we called up about five-thirty or five o'clock (I think), said, "We'll be down to dinner at six-thirty. Save us a table."

And Verna did the calling, and Steve was a little haughty. And he said, "Oh," he said, "we're closing at five-thirty. If you get here before then, we can serve you."

So we couldn't get there before then, so we said, "No," and we thought, "What's that all about?" And then it continued, and we

would call, and—it was usually on Friday, too. And, "Well, if you get here by five—" Well, that's ridiculous— five-thirty—you know, who wants to eat at five-thirty? Some people do, but—. Come to find out, they'd be goin' somewhere, and they would just close up. And then it got even worse; they would not even open Friday. They'd want to go somewhere. And prior to that, why, she had her sister come in or they had somethin' so the place was always open.

But then they made some money, and they bought this and that, and they bought the property behind, they were doin' good. And they got real cocky and closed up whenever they felt like it, which is—I mean that's their privilege; it's their place. If they, you know—they can close forever. And we didn't talk to them at all about it, except, you know, if they'd ask us, we'd say, "Gee," you know, "we'd like to eat," and all. And they were real independent—"Boy, this is the way it is."

And so then Verna and I talked about it. And well, we could handle it okay; we had our own kitchen, but we said, "Gee, that's terrible for people come up here, and it's May or somethin', you know, and expectin'—" (and the other restaurants wouldn't open till summer, you know) , "and here they get in town, there's no place to eat!" I said, "That's terrible!"

So, the other restaurant in town (they were havin' a terrible time) , it became available, and so I asked Verna, I said, "What do you think? It's—price is right. And I don't like the restaurant business, but," I said, "I'm sure we can handle it with help from Reno. And well, there'll be a place to eat in Stanley."

She said, "Let's do it." So we bought this other restaurant. And, course, Steve and Kathy have hated us ever since [laughter], which is the way people are. And we actually did it—. I've told a lot of people that story—. And

of course, some people believe it, and some don't. But the reason we own a restaurant is so there'll be a restaurant open in Stanley every day of the year. And we also bought the motel which was next door—became available. And now there's a place to—and we also bought another gas station, which is always open. So now, 365 days a year you can go to Stanley, and you can buy gas, you can get a room, and you can eat (which is kind of important, too). But then later we bought the grocery store, and we bought the ice cream parlor, and on and on and on. So we own an awful lot of Stanley.

It's rumored that you will have gambling in Stanley.

They used to have gambling there years ago. When I first went up there, all over the state it was gambling just in the back room, you know—it paid the sheriff off. But that hasn't been there in years, and we have no interest in gambling in Idaho. Well, Idaho isn't gonna have gambling, first of all—I'm sure of that. And then if they were, and we were interested, we wouldn't be in Stanley where there's forty-seven people; we'd be in Boise where there's a hundred thousand or eighty thousand or something. So it's just crazy.

And then to add fire to the rumor, we've got some beautiful property there right on the river. It all ties in together—all of our property. And so we built a very nice restaurant there. It's too nice for the town, really, but as long as we built it from the ground up—so as long as we're building it, we allowed for expansion. So we built a restaurant—it isn't open yet; the whole building is up, the interior isn't done. That'll take another six months, so it'll be the first of the year or so before it's actually open. But it's huge. And for Stanley, people look at it, "Well, that's a casino!" And it isn't; it's just the way that you should build things, when

you can, because five years later it's never big enough—if it's successful, which I'm sure it'll be successful. And no matter how you plan it, there's just—you put in ten booths, or if ten isn't enough, you should have twenty. So it's built nice and big to start with, but then if it is very successful, we can go out. But that's our fun place. Well, we went to Stanley, and Verna at first didn't like it. Well, she liked it—see, she was born and raised in Idaho, so she likes Idaho. But Stanley was kinda fun, but I'd been there before with my other wife so that there's always a damper, you know. But then when we added on and built the place for the kids and all, then it became her place as well as mine, which is nice. So we just loved it there. And we used to—for fun, we'd go to Ketchum and Sun Valley—just somethin' to ride; it's sixty miles. We'd ride down there and maybe go shopping, look around, have lunch or something.

And so we were talkin' one year, and it was like—it's amazing how fast this happened—it had to be after the first of the year (that was last year, '77). I'd say in January of '77 we were up there, and Verna said, "Wouldn't it be kinda fun to have a place here?"

And I said, "Well, yeah, it would," because Sun Valley is skiing and Stanley in the winter is snow—big on snow machines and cross-country skiing. And of course, Sun Valley and Ketchum is skiing.

And the kids and all—and she said, "It would be nice to have a place here and a really—it's a place to ski and all."

And I said, "Oh, I don't want to ski, but," I said, "I'd love bein' here. I'd like it."

And so we said, "Okay, let's get a place here."

So we got a realtor, very nice man (can't think of his name) [Winton Gray]. Forget how we got him, but he happened to be the mayor of Sun Valley, which was only a hundred and

eighty people there. But he's become a good friend; he's such a nice man. And so we talked to him. And he said, well, this and that, and we had this and this bracket and that bracket, and so on, and, "What's your numbers?"

And we said, "Well, we really—there's no really numbers on it. Let's just see what's for sale."

So we're lookin' at this and we're lookin' at that. And that's too far away, and that's too close. And he says, "Well, there's one for sale—or gonna be." And he said, "I'm not supposed to tell anybody about it; I'm sworn to secrecy. But," he said, "the man said, 'Sell it, but don't tell anybody.'" And he says, "I don't know how I'm gonna sell it if I don't tell anybody!" [Laughter] So he said, "I'm going to!"

And I said, "Okay, what is it?"

He said, "It's Bill Janss's place." Bill Janss was the owner of Sun Valley; he's supposed to be a zillionaire and all. And they'd had two terrible seasons—no snow, you know—so we knew he was hurtin'. Rumors around, you know, and they had big expense there; three or four hundred employees had to get paid every day, and waitin' for it to snow. You just can't wait till it snows and then go look for some employees; you know how that is. So they put 'em on about late October, early November, and they'd go through the winter and no snow two years in a row! So the nut was just—he lost several million dollars, I think. And we got to know him very well. His wife is Glenn Janss. They're wonderful people. We got to be good friends.

Anyway, the Janss—well, why?—you know. Well, 'cause he really—he needed the money, but he didn't want anybody to know he needed the money. And he was that bad off. So it was for sale, and it was over a million dollars. And we looked at it, and that you look at, it's a million-dollar house. And seven acres right in the heart of Sun Valley, and right

on the golf course, and nobody around, and the stream goes right by the door, and just perfect, and unbelievable (I'd like you to see it someday) —just unbelievable, one-of-a-kind house in the whole world. And all the rooms are double height, you know—the ceiling is eighteen, twenty feet; two chimneys; and on and on and on—just a magnificent home.

So anyway, like I said, it was January or late January, and we decided we wanted the place. And by the middle of February we bought this place. And it was like somebody wanted us to have it because it just came on the market the week that we started looking for a place, and, of course, it's a lot of money; everybody couldn't afford it. So it just was meant for us to have.

We have that now, and we've remodeled it—odds and ends, just little things we like, like our bathrooms have to be just so and our kitchen was excellent, but we like a family room we have here, and we have in Stanley, in a way. And then in Sun Valley we've set it up, too, and we have our three TVs there so we can watch three shows if we want. And like we go there, and we have a drink before dinner and on and on—our life-style—it just fits our life-style.

We have that, so then between that and that, plus I wanted the boys to learn to water ski and sail. I can water ski just barely, and I can sail just barely—not even barely. But, okay, how do you do that? And we spend a lot of time—you know, we go to Tahoe, of course, but we spend more time in Idaho than we do at Tahoe—for all those reasons. So we looked around up there, and we wanted a home on a lake. And sure you can—there's a lot of lakes there, and you can tow your boat up and then back the trailer in the water and all that. And the way I'm constructed, I'm just lazy, I guess it is. If the boat's out in front, I go water ski and I go for a boat ride. But if I have to go,

and ba ba ba, back in and all that, I'll say, "Oh, poohy! I won't bother with it!"

So we looked for a home on a lake, and there's hardly any up there. The Forest Service owns everything. And there's just a few homes, and they're tryin' to phase them out. But at Pettit Lake, which is about halfway between Stanley and Ketchum-Sun Valley, and it's about three or four miles off the highway—is this cute little lake. It's about two miles long and maybe a mile, three quarters of a mile wide. But it's quite adequate for water skiing and sailing on. I think there's about twenty cabins there, that are on land leases. And they're very popular, so none was for sale. And then we found one that was for sale, and then it wasn't for sale, and so and so.

And then we got this one which, it was—Bill Janss was part owner, of it; this was the year before we got his home. And it was a real run-down little—most of 'em aren't much; they're just summer cabins. And we always have to fix everything up, so we fixed it up real cute. And it didn't cost a lot of money. And we've stayed there at night, but it's so handy—it's only twenty minutes, thirty minutes from Stanley, so we can drive up and take our lunch and go waterskiing and all that, and sailing, and whatever, and come back the same day. And we have stayed overnight. But we fixed it— it's a tiny little place—but we fixed up, where Verna and I have a room and the boys have a room, and even security has a place there. And we have our dock, which is so nice, and we have a nice ski boat out in front, and we have a cute little sailboat out in front, and then some playthings the kids like, like rubber rafts and things, you know. So summertime we'll go there—.

And then also last year we went—which I think we'll do again (I m digressing a little but not much) —we went backpacking. We've read about that and thought, "Well, gee, that

would be fun to try." And we did it just right; I'm kinda proud of that. Like we talked to Ivan [Sack] on it, and he gave us some pointers. Fact, he was gonna go, and then he got ill.

So we laid out a way to go up there. In fact, we left from a point maybe five miles south of Stanley, and then we finished at Pettit Lake, and I think it was maybe nineteen miles or twenty-one miles. But Verna was gonna meet us—she couldn't go; she got sick at the last minute. And she was gonna meet us at the cabin at Pettit; we got there early, but she was there, which was pleasing. We were going to get there in two and a half days. Okay, so let's say we left on a Monday, and we went—and it was really fun. Ted [Ererson], my security, went; he's a big strong guy. He carried forty-some pounds, I remember. And Ivan was gonna go, and as Ivan couldn't go—and he's our "woodsman"—we took a man from Stanley, an Albert Denny, who's been there since I've been there, who's a wonderful man. He works for us in Middle Fork sometimes. He's in his sixties, and he's strong as an ox. I think he carried thirty-some pounds. And then the three boys and me— I carried, I think sixteen pounds, which was somethin', you know. And the boys carried around ten, I think. And it was a wonderful experience for all of us.

Anyway, we went, and the first day we'd had our camp picked out, which was fine. And it was on a lake. And we asked Ivan—Ivan isn't always wrong; he's usually right, but sometimes he's wrong—and we asked him beforehand, we said, "Well, should we take tents?"

And he said, "No way!" He said, "That's terrible! You're backpacking," he said, "you know," this and that.

I said, "Well, they make tents weigh four pounds," you know.

"No, no, that's terrible!"

So at the last minute, I think at Verna's insistence, we took some little tents that weighed nothing.

Well, anyway, we got up in our first camp, and so we had the tents; we spread 'em out. And we had three tents, and so I was with Tony in one, and John was with Albert in one, and Ted and Richard were in one. And that night it started raining, and it rained and rained and rained and rained. So it was wonderful having tents. But we were set up—we really hadn't planned it too good 'cause we didn't really think it was gonna rain. So I woke up about (this is unimportant, but I'll tell it anyway) —about three in the morning (I had a flashlight, of course), and I looked at my watch—three o'clock—and I was wet, and the tent was leaking! I was wet, and I looked at Tony—he was sound asleep—but he was wet, and I thought, "Well—." And I tried to move around and all, and it was just terrible.

So I said, "Well, now this—I can lie here—I'm not gonna sleep a wink; I know it. I'm cold and wet. But I can leave the others, or I can—you know," and I really argued with myself. And I thought—in cases like that, I can usually think it pretty good, so I said, "Well, what's the intelligent thing to do? Will I be glad tomorrow I did—or next week or next month—will I be glad I did—? Well, I'll be glad that I got out of the tent and went over and woke up Ted and Albert and said, "Hey, I'm freezin' to death; let's dry things out; let's start a fire; let's—you know."

So I did—I went over and woke up Ted, and he got right up; he was—you know, he didn't growl. He was a little wet, too—everybody was a little wet, although they were sound asleep. And of course, when they woke up (Albert and—), they were glad I'd woke 'em, you know. So they started a big fire, and it was hard to start because the logs were wet.

But they—you know—mountain men can do it. So they started this big fire, and of course, the kids were tickled to death! And we all dried out and reset our tents and went back to bed, and it was fine. And we woke up the next day, it was clear.

Then we went on, and we did a lot of climbing, and it was straight up, and well, it wasn't really—there was a trail. [As] much you could go, maybe, or I could go with my wind, which is fair because I do jog; 'course, Albert and Ted were super. And the kids, like little John—he stayed right with Albert; they went out in front. And then Richard and Tony were about my speed. Then finally I got to counting, and there you were—and we kept getting higher and higher, you know; we're up—nine thousand feet, something like that. So we re climbing, and we had a long ways to go. And you re climbing—you know, up—not hand over hand, but it's real steep—with a pack on your back. And I got a little trick of my own: I could go about a hundred steps, and then I'd stop, and I'd rest till I got my—and I wouldn't wait till I wasn't breathing heavy, you know, but, why, I'd slow down; then I'd do it again. So I just kept movin' right along, and as I said, John and Albert went on out in front.

So we got on, and we came to our second camp, and we got there at lunchtime. And we thought, "Well, gee whiz, there's no sense—you know—and it's only another eight miles (which is a long ways) or six miles. But, why don't we go on? But Verna won't be there, but so what? We can break a window if we have to," 'cause we didn't have any keys or anything. So we went on; 'course, we got pretty tired near the end, but we were still goin' okay. And so then we made it around four or five o'clock to the cabin, and Verna was there! And because we were—I'll never forget—I had a can of Coors (we have a refrigerator there, of course)—and I had a can of Coors, and it was

the best can of beer I ever had in my life, you know, cause you're tired [breathes heavily—pants] and dirty and sweaty and on. I said, "What are you doin' here?"

And she said, "Well, I know you!" She said, "I know darn well if you're goin' pretty good, you're gonna [laughs] keep on going, and you would get here ahead." And so she just figured we would.

And of course, the kids just loved it. Well, they liked the walkin' and the scenery and the mountains and runnin'. But also bein' dirty and all 'cause you get on those—you're never really clean; you try to pretend you're clean, but you're not. It was great.

But anyway, like last summer, of the ten weeks, maybe, summertime, I'd say we spent maybe six of 'em in Idaho. And it's great. In Stanley we have the—which Verna named—it's a little hamburger place; we call it the French Fry Connection. And we run that, and our restaurants, and our bar, and our motel, and our two gas stations. We put in a pizza parlor there last summer, which was fun, really. It's a good pizza parlor. It's the only one in the county. And things like that are fun, and it's good for the kids, you know. They get a touch of business and—.

Then in Ketchum, there was a Volkswagen agency for sale there, a nice little building right in Ketchum—Volkswagen and Audi and Porsche. And then that's a great Jeep country, and there's a Jeep agency there, and so I bought that from the fella [that] had the Jeep, and bought him out and moved it over with the—. So I have a real nice little car agency there that does all right. It's nothing like here, and it's small expense because of it, and we have some good management, and it's a fun thing for me, and—like I get up in the morning in Sun Valley and get to have breakfast and drink our coffee and watch the news. Then I get dressed and go down—we'll

go to the grocery store or something, and then I'll go over to the agency, which is right across from the grocery store, and, "What's goin' on? What's—" you know, this and that. And it's fun.

Then we had a chance to buy a general store there, and it's the best location in Ketchum. And the place did a lot of—does a big business; and it just sells, well, odds and ends kinda—like you need jeans or you need mittens or you need just low-price stuff, and it's—they carry a big stock. It's called DeCostas, and it's an excellent location; it does a big business. We did a lot of shopping there for years. And the place makes a lot of money—I mean for that kind of a store.

So I'd admired the store, and the fella who ran it was a real crabby guy. And he was real suspicious, like you'd come in, he'd watch ya like you're gonna steal something, you know, and just real negative. And he wrote me a letter, and, "Dear Mr. Harrah—" (and I guess that was after I bought the Jeep agency or the Volkswagen) —he said, "I see you're buying something—would you be interested in a store like that?"

And I go, "Wow! How come—?" And come to find out, he'd been there about five or six years, and he'd made a lot of money. And his home was in California, which he liked. And plus he knew he wasn't cut out for it; he was just so nervous somebody was gonna steal somethin', and the least little thing would drive him crazy. He was like this [nervous, shaking], you know.

so anyway, it was for sale, and so he—"What do you want?" Well, he didn't know, and so we had it appraised and made him an offer, and he accepted it. So—zing! We were in the store business. And we've done a lot of things—see, like he'd buy somethin' and it wouldn't sell, which you can do. He would never discount it, or he would never—it would

just sit there. So he had a lot of out-of-date stock. And you know, well, what can I do? There it is, you know—old—like jeans—out-of-style jeans and stuff. So we went in with a pretty good management, and like we sold the jeans for a dollar a pair, two dollars a pair. And now we have all the proper swingin' jeans, so it's doing very well. And we go down and look at that, so it's—.

The Ketchum area—Sun Valley—there's a lot of—it's amazing! See, in the season there's a lot of people there, and there's a lot of money there. And like there's maybe ten to fifteen excellent restaurants there, if you can believe it— I mean, gourmet-type restaurants—or maybe fifteen or twenty. And they close when it's slow, but when it's pretty good, they open. When you want to go out to dinner, why, there's a choice of fifteen to twenty excellent restaurants. It's a real fun place. And then still sixteen miles away, why here's Stanley with one restaurant. And again it's good for the kids; they see the whole picture.

And then, getting back to Idaho—just a few things—we don't go to the Lodge much any more, but of course, we're in Stanley a lot. But we do go. You can go down the river—see, the river, the middle fork of the Salmon River, starts about maybe thirty miles above the Lodge. And it comes out on the main river, which is the end of the middle fork, about seventy miles down river; it's about a hundred and five miles. And you can float it on a rubber raft or a dory-type boat, and we've done that for years. I've been down there about twelve times, I guess. And Verna and I, and the boys—we go—we've gone every year for five years. And it's a fun thing we look forward to. And we either leave from the main—depending on the height of the river—we'll leave from Dagger Falls; that's where you put in. And then the Lodge is about two days down. So the first night you camp out; second

night you're at the Lodge, which is kinda nice 'cause we have our rooms there, and we just go into our room and get the things that you forgot, like your suntan lotion or whatever. And then from there it's about three or four days more—three days—and you just float down the river and camp at night. And we take about the same crew, and we take a dory also, so we have two large rubber rafts and a dory. And we have Bob Cole from the Lodge, who's the manager, and we also have some professional boatmen. And all we do is just sit on the boat and go along. Of course, the kids just love it! That's their happy time of the year, 'cause you're camping out all the time, and they can swim in the river, and there's sandbars you stop on and they dig holes in the sand and they catch pollywogs, and on and on and on. It's just super. And you really get away; see, there's nothing down there. There's no civilization whatsoever.

In fact, I went down there first in 1948 on a rubber raft, and it was unheard-of then, 'cause one place we stopped they had a cache, and it was put up where the water couldn't get to it. And there was this can in there—tin can—it was a pretty good—like a metal box. And the fella I went with, he was one of the first to go down. So he'd started this thing, and there was a scroll in there that you signed; you became a member of the (what's the name) the Wild Rivers or something. And I was Number Twenty-four to sign it. And I thought, "Well, there've been a few Injuns here, but I'm one of the first white men."

Now, of course, there's—oh, I think there's two thousand— we count 'em; they go by the Lodge, and we made a real nice place which I'm kinda proud of, a place where they can pull in with their rafts, and we sell 'em beer and suntan oil and things like that. And so many people forget those things. And you're halfway—you know—and no suntan oil.

And just the simple little things that you forget. And they're just so appreciative. And we don't make any money on it; we have one little girl runnin' it. Fact, we lose money—but just maybe her salary, which is nothing. But it's such a (what is it) public relations thing, for what that's worth—I get letters, you know—"Dear Mr. Harrah, We were in there and there, and we'd lost our sunglasses, and the type of eyes I have I really shouldn't—you know. And you had sunglasses—" just on and on and on.

And there's a funny story. We went fishing one morning. We go fishin' up the river about a couple of miles—salmon fishin'—that's the only kind of fishin' I do. And when we left, I know, we were up a little ways. And this boat party came by, and they had—there's a lot of boat parties, but I noticed them because they had some nice equipment, and they were dressed similar—was a first-class outfit. I think they had about two boats and maybe six or eight fellas. We didn't do very good, 'cause usually you're back by noon or before. But we take a lunch just in case. But we're up there, say, most of the day, and I think everybody caught a fish but somebody, and we just stayed; so it may be three or four comin' back, which is very late to come in from salmon fishin'. So we came in, and these boats are pulled in at our place. So I knew they got there at nine or ten in the morning, and it's four in the afternoon—"My God! Somebody's sick or," you know, "accident." So gee, I rushed, you know. And I asked the first person I ran into—I said [stuttering] "W-what's goin' — what wha-wha-wha-wha—?"

And they laughed, and said, "Well, it's a gang of guys from Boise (or somethin'), and they came along, and they're beer drinkers. And they ran out of beer, and they came down here and found we had cold beer! [Laughing] They sat there all day and drank beer! And we

were rushin'—we ran out of cold—and we're puttin' it in the freezer to get it cold, so— you know." Then when they left, they took a couple of cases with them.

And then the salmon fishin', which is a run up there, which is the craziest thing ever—the life of a salmon is just really weird. They go up there to spawn, and they have to go from the Pacific Ocean into the Columbia River into the Snake River into the Salmon River into the middle fork of the Salmon River. And when they're hatched and they go down the river, there's a little somethin' in nature that tells 'em where. And when they come back, they put tags on 'em. Here's a bunch of salmon swimmin', and this salmon was spawned up the main river, and this salmon was spawned up the middle fork; and they just without hesitation—this one goes this way [points] and this one goes this way. It's the craziest thing ever. And they come up there, and there is a salmon season. And you're torn two ways on that; if you catch 'em after they spawn, they're no good. So you catch 'em before they spawn; but then if you catch 'em before they spawn, then you're killing a lot of unborn salmon, you know. So, it's a thing, but when there's a lot of 'em, you don't feel too bad about it. And for a while there, it was gettin' real scarce. And it's not back where it should be now. When I first was up there, there was a zillion salmon. But like many things, they put you—. And then it was handled poorly down below. That was a problem.

The Indians down there, there's no laws on them, so they can spear 'em, and apparently nothing can be done about that. They had some dams down there they built, and the fall of the water—and if water falls a far enough distance when it falls on other water, it produces nitrogen, which'll kill the fish. And the fish were dying, and they couldn't figure out why, and then they—. This is just what I

read and talked to Bob Cole and all. But there really wasn't too much interest in it. And we joined all the fish associations there were, and Bob got in it very deep. Then finally there was some interest, and committees formed, and, "What the hell's goin' on here?" And they discovered that the nitrogen actually killed the fish. Well, then how do you stop it? Well, by breaking the fall. Like if the water falls twenty feet, there's no nitrogen; but if it falls forty feet, there's nitrogen; and if it falls sixty feet, there's no nitrogen. It's just one of those things. So they discovered these things that they built, these dams and things—they were zillion-dollar dams—but they could put fixtures on 'em so that it would break. Instead of fallin' forty feet, it would fall thirty, and then it would run over here and fall—. So then with that, plus there were many fish being lost—just little side streams that nobody fished, nothing, and then the fish would get out in the field, you know, and just die out there, which they've closed those up, too. So it's come back quite good. And then it varies from year to year, you know, 'cause they come back every four years. So if there were very few four years ago, then there'll be fewer this year. And if there were a lot four years ago, then you can expect a lot of fish. So it's all very interesting.

I took a lot of interest in it because I admire the salmon, you know, and they swim all that way upstream. They don't eat after they leave the ocean, and sixty-pound salmon when he leaves the ocean, he gets up our way, he's a thirty-pound salmon, you know, all that swimming. It's a crazy story. And they go up there, and you can see them spawn up—they get up beyond—in fact, west of Stanley is the spawning beds. And it's an exciting story. And then, I've caught a lot of salmon, of course. I'm a fair fisherman, but I always have someone along that knows—like Bob Cole is excellent.

He's our guide up— well, that's a story, too—an interesting story.

We got the Lodge in '65, and Bob Cole, who was the well driller from Twin Falls—very successful—he and his father (I mentioned his father bought the thing). I went fishing; before I even went in the middle fork, I fished the main river. And I love salmon fishin'; it's quite a thrill—you get a twenty, thirty pound salmon on your line in a little river, that is exciting! So I liked it, and it's 'bout the only form of fishing I like. So I started fishing and enjoyed it, but I was a bum fisherman, and I had brains enough to know it. So I'd always have a guide, and he would take me the right—and you know, what was good last year, this year is different; the river changed in the winter, and so that hole's no good any more. Also this is what they're biting, plus puttin' the hooks on—I can do it, but I don't like to. So I had several guides and just got along fine with a guide, you know. And I always liked the people and admired them, and they seemed to get along with me.

So year after year I'd have this guide, and then he'd move away, and this one and that one, and so on. And so one year I was up there, and I had the guide lined up. And he was from somewhere near Boise, where he worked in the winter, and then he'd come up in the summer. But then his daughter got in trouble or his wife was injured or something—all of a sudden he couldn't come. So, and here it is June or middle of June—the salmon season opens day after tomorrow, and I have no guide. And so boy, what am I gonna do?

So I went, and there was one fella I admired very much, who—I can look up his name. He owned a gas station in lower Stanley (there's an upper Stanley and lower Stanley; lower Stanley doesn't amount to much). But I admired him 'cause he took this nothin' gas station and by working' real hard, he built

it up into somethin' and sold it out for a lot of money— later. I admired 'cause he was a hustler. So I bought gas there, and I liked him.

And so I was in there, and we were talkin'—yackety, yackety, yack—and, "How's things?"

And I said, "Oh, darn it! Salmon season opens day after tomorrow and I don't have a guide!" I said, "Do you know any guides?"

And he said, "God, no, I don't." And he said, "Wait a minute, wait a minute!" He said, "Do you know Bob Cole?"

And I said, "Uh—2"

And he said, "Well, the fella over there." And I'd seen him around.

So I said, "Oh, yeah, I've seen him."

And he said, "Well, he's from Twin, and he's not a guide; he's just a fisherman." He said, "He owns his own business. But he loves to fish. Let me ask him if he'll take you up."

I said, "Oh, gee, I don't want to bother anybody," which I really didn't. Here's an independent guy; he's come up to go salmon fishin', and then he's gotta drag me along.

And so he said, "Well, let me ask him!"

And so I said, "Okay."

So I asked him, and he said he'd heard of me or somethin'— he said, "No, I'll be glad to take—" So how do you do [gesture handshake] —.

So we went, and Bob was just a super guide. And he could catch a fish just no problem at all, but he was always helpin' me and helpin' whoever was with us and baitin' our hooks and puttin' new hooks on and tellin' you where to throw your line and all that—and just a wonderful guide!

So we went fishing that year a lot. And then you could go fishing—now they're two salmon a year; in those days it was I think two salmon in possession, so you could fish all year, you know, and give 'em to somebody and go fishin' again. So I fished a lot.

So it was either the first year or the second year, and Bob's—nothin'; he wouldn't even—well, he'd let me buy him his lunch. And by then we were good friends—"Bob" and "Bill." So one day I just got to him; I said, "I love our association and all, but," I said, "I know you're—" like he would take of f from Twin—that's quite a ways (a hundred miles, a hundred 'n' somethin')—"come up just to take me fishin'," I said, "I want to pay ya some—I don't want to insult ya, but what's right's right."

And he said, "Oh—oh—"

And I said, "Well, think about it."

So he went, and a week went by and nothin', and I said, "Well, did you think—?"

And he said, "Well, yeah, I guess so."

And I said, "Okay," and we'd been fishin' that day, and I said, "Okay, can I pay ya for today?"

And he said, "Okay."

I said, "How much is it?"

And he said—we'd been out all day—I think it was five dollars [laughs].

I said, "That's terrible! That's fifty cents an hour!"

So [laughing] he said, "What do you think?"

I said, "Well, ten—twenty," and I insisted on I think ten; I doubled it. And then the next day I thought, "Well, that's not enough," so then I think I got up to twenty. But he would never—you know—and he wasn't there for the money. And it was just his expenses, is really what he was accepting. Plus he had to leave his wife at home, and I guess she was crabbin' a little bit. And when he got, you know, paid, why it helped a little.

But anyway, when we got the Lodge, why, Bob—and he knew we were getting it, and we've been there since, of course. By then his well drilling, I think there'd been a big spurt of it. There'd been a water shortage or something, or a threat of a water shortage. And so there'd

been a lot of articles in the paper, well drillers are makin' a lot of money, so a whole bunch of people went into well drilling business. And where he and his father had one competitor in forty miles, they all of a sudden had ten or twelve, so it was just nothin'. So they had it all worked out good because we were opening the Lodge, and I said, "How about comin' in there, Bob, as fishing guide?"

And he—"Oh, wonderful, wonderful." And he came in, and he's been there ever since. And he did such a good job that— we had a lot of manager trouble there—so we made him a manager, and that didn't work out. He's an excellent fishing guide; he's not a good manager. Some are, and some aren't. And so that was extremely delicate to unpromote him from manager to fishing guide—back to fishing guide—but we enlarged the title a little more and got the money just right, and—. So then since then, we've had four or five or six or eight managers, and Bob's still there. In fact, when the manager leaves, Bob's the manager till we get a new one—till finally about two years ago we got a guy that fits, which is—usually somebody for every job, if you can find them. We finally found the right guy, and everything's fine. But Bob's still there.

Then last year, my wife, Verna, who's very small—she'd never been fishing (salmon fishing); she wasn't interested. And the boys loved it, of course. So we'd go up, and there's a lot of people there; you have to do it just right, and we have guests go up. But we went up, and many years it's no good; it's very poor, but last year was pretty good, so we went up. And this one day we went, and Verna went along. And so the boys—I think there were the three boys and me and Verna, and somebody else, like her father or somebody. So I caught the first fish (you're allowed two), and one of the boys caught one, and her father caught one if he

was there, and then the other boy caught one, and then I caught one, and—. So we all filled out—Verna hadn't caught any [chuckles], and she—"Meee! I'm gonna quit!"

And we—"Bob, come and help Verna." But she would throw it, you know, but she'd get caught and all this and this. And then she just—and there's luck in it; her line was goin' in the right place. And just the fish grabs it or it doesn't; there's a lotta luck in it.

So we'd all caught two fish, I think. So finally—she hadn't caught a fish! So finally, she was ready to quit, "let's go," you know. And the later in the day it gets, the worse it gets. And so—"Well, try it." Well, she'll try it ten more times or something. None of us were payin' attention; we were lookin' at somethin' else, and maybe people across the river were fishing and had something, so we weren't paying attention. So we looked, and she's got a fish on—oh, wow!

So, we—you know, hooray, she's catching a fish, and then Bob instantly said—could tell by her line and all—he said, "That's a big one." And, "Be sure the hook's set and all," which it was. And you learn to fish yourself, you know; that's real important. Oh, that day I'd finally hooked one and let her pull it in, you know, 'cause I felt—you know, which was pullin' one in, but it's not the same. Well, anyway, this one she hooked so she—"Oh, I hooked my own!"—hooray, hooray!

So then we realized it was a big one, so then—and we got a look at it, and it was a big one.

So up there they run a—oh, you catch a salmon, and a good one is, what, twelve pounds is pretty good—I mean I'm happy with a twelve-pound salmon. And fifteen is good and twenty is very good. We caught maybe eight fish among us before she caught one—was, I would say, fifteen, twelve, eighteen, twenty-one, nineteen—like that.

So we could see this was a big one, and so she kept pullin' and pullin', and it's twenty, thirty minutes and got it in close, and she is very tiny. So she was—you know—pole was way down, so we had another guide along—well, Bob was there, but this other guide—. So the only help she had was he got in front of her, and she could rest her pole on his shoulder, like this, you know. But she was still doin' this [reeling in], but just to keep her from pullin' [chuckling] her in the river!

So anyway, it came in finally, and we take a net along, intelligently—a great big net. So we saw it, and it was a great big fish. And we thought, "Oh God, don't lose that one!" And some fish, they'll fight right at the end, and he kinda came in and just kinda swam in the net, and we got him; Bob pulled him in. So it was a huge fish. And we weighed 'im, and it was thirty-seven pounds, ten ounces, which is the second biggest fish ever caught up there. Bob Cole caught a thirty-eight pounder one time or a forty pounder, but—. And then we care about, you know—"Well, you didn't catch one in a long time, but when you did, you—."

So we had it mounted, and then we have it mounted; it came out—you send it away and it takes months. And then it came back—out to HAG, and it's like that. And then we'll send it up to the Lodge, and it'll be—we have a barroom up there, and it'll be in the barroom—Verna's name on it and the date and all that. And then, of course, we say, "Well, boy, took you a long time, but when you did it, you did good."

And now you get in a fishing conversation about anything, she's—"I caught—I caught the second biggest salmon ever—!" [Laughs] But see, it's her thirty-seven pounder there; he had to weigh sixty-five, seventy pounds when he left the ocean! It's exciting.

Also something of interest up there, we have the barroom, which is an extremely

popular place there, of course. And then it was too small, so we added on, and we did it beautifully. And we added a huge room, and it's almost like one now; if you didn't know, you'd think it was one room. And it's the bar, and you go in here and it's much larger. And we have a pool table and a Ping-Pong table, and it's laid out just right: it's plenty big, and there's chairs for people to watch if people are playing pool, and it's—you know, there's a lot of wall space. And I started collecting Western art some years ago just 'cause I liked it. And I had a Russell; I remember I paid five thousand dollars for it. And I thought, "Gee, that's a lotta money," and now it's worth forty, I guess.

And then I got into it and got interested, and we had this room in there, I said, "Gee, let's get some more." So we started really goin' after the stuff. And I'd go to the sale up in Great Falls. On Russell's birthday or thereabouts they have a Russell auction of Western art up there. And we used to go—we kinda quit going 'cause every year they'd have two or three Russells. And there's other stuff, of course, that's good, but I especially liked Russells. They have a Russell museum in Great Falls 'cause that was his home, and it's full of Russell paintings; they have several hundred in there. And then the money from the auction that they would make, they would go buy some more Russells. So it just became a defeating thing in a way. I think I was to one auction where they didn't even have one Russell. Oh, and they'd have a lot of phony stuff—this is something that he was purported to have done, or this is a good student of his—you know, not a real Russell. It kinda pooped out. We watch it closely, and they know what we want. And we say, "Hey, you got any real Russells," to call us up.

We've missed a lot, but on purpose, because the kind of Russells I like, and as

I'm the boss, none of the blood and thunder where there's a horse down with a broken leg, or there's a bear chewin' the head off of something, that kind—none of that. And we have some real cute ones; I hope you can see 'em sometime. Like one is "Forest Friends," and it's four or five deer. And there on the background, there's kind of a log; and on this side there's a little rabbit with his ears up, and he's lookin' like that and the deer lookin' at the rabbit like that, you know. And done so perfect, you know; they're just—every muscle, every head and—. One deer is kinda over here, and there's one deer clear in the back—you oughta see, you know, just—that kind of stuff we have. But we have about five or six of his now, I think—some real good stuff.

Then we have another one that is unsigned, and as I said earlier, I don't like the unsigned stuff. But it has the history on it, and I bought it at this auction for I think— one of the auctions—for five thousand dollars, which at the time was—it's a very good buy. And it's a Russell without question; it's unsigned, but the way it's done and the history and—. What bar is that? The bar that he hung around in Great Falls? Anyway this friend of his owned the bar, and it's in the books. And the back bar had mirrors, of course, and he said, "Hey, Charlie, would you paint somethin' up there for me?" So he painted those two mirrors, and it's painted here and painted here, and then up the top there's a—I think it's an elk. Yeah. It's just a beautiful thing, and the mirror, the whole thing. And that whole thing was for sale—the mirrors mounted, just the way it came out of the bar. And nobody bid on it except me to amount to anything, and I was amazed how cheap I got it, talkin' around—and there's other collectors, you know, and I said, you know, "How come you want—"

And he said, "Well, I have no place for it." He said, "My house is—" so and so. And

he said, "I couldn't—that has to go as one piece," and he said, "there's no place for—I have no place." And most of the collectors, they just had no place and it was heavy and everything.

So we took it to the Lodge and put it over the fireplace, and it's as though it was made for it. We didn't have to move anything an inch. And you look at it, it looks like, well, you built the fireplace to fit the paintings. And so it's just so beautiful, and this mirror and all.

And we have some other artists—what's our Number Two? He's similar. Seltzer's our Number Two. We have about three of his. Then we have one Remington, but the Remington's a bronze.

Seltzer has one I just love; I got it at the Great Falls auction, It's painted on an elk skin. The elk skin is mounted on a board, And it's a painting of an elk. It's just an extremely rare thing. And this beautiful—it sounds kinda corny, but it's—. I think we have three or four Seltzers and the one Remington and four or five Russells.

I didn't tell ya how you get in there, did I. Well, it's a nineteen hundred-foot strip, which scares a lot of people— you do go down through and, you know—but the pilots, I think they've made two thousand landings in there now with no trouble. And we have a Twin Otter airplane, which is two engine and is designed for that.

There's a real cute story on that. Before we bought the Lodge, we had a King Air, which wasn't really the plane; it was borderline—you could take it. And we had a Queen Air and King Air, and they weren't really that type of plane, and we were looking around; we didn't know what we wanted. And so I was at the Lodge (this is a real interesting story), and I looked up— I heard a plane—I looked up, and it was a Twin Otter.

Well, an Otter is made by DeHaviland of Canada, and it's a backwoods plane. And there was an Otter with a single engine. Then when they put two engines, they called it the Twin Otter. And it's a real awkward-lookin' thing. It has a big wing and a big fuselage, and the wheels below, and the wheels don't retract, and it's real awkward.

And I looked up, and here's this big plane, and I thought, "Well, that's an interesting plane." I saw it wasn't a homemade thing; it was a well—you know. I thought, "Gee, what is it?" And I could see they were circling, and they landed on the strip. It's a state strip, but it's just a half a mile, so I went rushin' over to the strip. And here's the Otter, and I was oh [mouth dropped] like that. And the pilot got out and said, "Hello. Mr. Harrah here?"

And I said, "Yeah."

And he said, "Well—" (I'm just lookin' at the plane like a kid, you know), and he said, "Well, we're from Twin Otter of Canada, and this is Twin Otter, and we're making a tour of United States."

And I said, "Well, how did you happen to come here?"

And he said, "Well, we were in Boise and asked if there's anybody might be interested in one of these, and somebody said, 'Well, that Harrah in the Middle Fork might—he's got some money; he might.'" So "Well, do you want to take a ride?"

And I said, "Gee, I sure do!"

And so we took off, and we flew somewhere. And they had a real pro pilot. And so he said, well, get up in the seat beside him, which I did. And he, "You wanta fly?"

And I said, "No, no, I can fly a little plane; this isn't my stuff, but I'd like to ride up here and see what you do." So we flew, and we went somewhere and landed, and then we came back.

And so we come in, and it's a nineteen-hundred-foot strip. So we came in, and he said, "I'm gonna show you how this thing can land and stop." He said, "This is really a show-off stop." So he came in, and as he landed, he flew real slow—gee, he was down to forty miles an hour, something like that, when he landed. And he put on the brakes, and he reversed the props at the same time, so we landed and stopped in about two hundred feet.

So I said, "My, wow, that's something! Gee, that's unbelievable!"

So he said, "Okay," he said, "what would you like to do now, Mr. Harrah?"

And of course, there's where we got in, up there. So I said just what he wanted me to say. I said, "Well, taxi up to the other end of the runway."

And he said, "That's too far to taxi; I'll fly." So he revved it up and then let the brakes go, and we just jumped up in the air. And we flew eight hundred feet or so; then he put it on again.

So [laughing] I said, "We can get together on the numbers?" I said, "You just sold an airplane." And then we did, of course, and the price was, I think, five hundred somethin'—five hundred thousand dollars. But it's a very large—it's nineteen seats, and it has a big cab. And 'course, you can haul—we haul old cars in it and things.

And then surprisingly, they were extremely popular. We got one of the very first ones. And we flew it several years, and they came out with a later model. And we knew the later model was coming out, so we ordered it. And so when we got it, then we sold the other one. And we sold the first one for more than we paid for it and enough to buy this new one 'cause they were just—like in Alaska and all, which is where our other one went, and then

got cracked up, up there, which was pilot error— those were super planes.

But then I mentioned the car—we have antique cars there, which fit really, you know, good in there. And you do have to go from the airport, so we have Jeeps and Land Rovers and that sort of thing for general use. But then we also have (let me see, what do we have now?) Pope Hartford, 1911; and a '26 Chevrolet station wagon; and a 'em—I think we have a Model T— Model T bus, a 1914 bus. I think that's all we have, and then I think we have three pieces, plus the other, you know. And a person's first trip, we meet 'em at the airport with either the Model T bus or the Pope Hartford. And it's a little dirt road over to the Lodge, and we have a bridge there; you land on one side of the river, and the Lodge is on the other. But we have a bridge we put in that's a wonderful bridge. That was fun doin' that because there's a lot in buildin' bridges, and this is a steel bridge, but we put logs on it so it looks like a wooden bridge, except you can see the suspension. It's the prettiest bridge on the river—very artistic. And it's big enough for a Model T bus or a Pope Hartford.

It sounds neat for a place that's supposed to be just purely business.

Yeah, uh-huh. Yeah, it is—well, it's so much fun—people comin' down the river, and their first trip, you know, and they think they're in the middle of nowhere, and they come along, here's an old Pope Hartford and—. Never forget one; there's usually boat parties, there's three or four boats. And we're out by the swimming pool one day; it was a beautiful day, and there were six or eight of us in our swimming suits out there. I think we were having a buffet lunch and drinkin' our beer or our vodka or whatever, and a

boat party came along, and they were kind of a do-it-yourself boat party—two or three kids or teenagers or twenty-year-olds. And the first boat— and it was so fun—one of 'em looked and [gasps, mouth open]— and he turned around and yelled. And the other boat wasn't in sight yet, but they could hear. He said, "Hey, Joe! Wait till you get here and see how the other half lives" or "other rich people live!" And it is, I love to close my eyes because you come around, and you see nothin' but backwoods, you know— rocks and trees and no civilization whatsoever. And you come around, and we have a beautiful lawn, a beautiful swimming pool, and beautiful Lodge, you know; and you just can't believe it!

What's the real purpose of the Lodge, now?

Well, we have to have a business purpose, of course; but primarily—and it is, it is the true business purpose. Of course, the rules are so strict now, it's very difficult; but it was to entertain our good customer. There is an elk season up there and a deer, or course. Deer is nothin', but elk is pretty rare. We take some of our good customers hunting up there, and some of our good customers on boat parties, plus our stars. Many of our stars have been there. Jim Nabors's been there many times, and John Denver's been there, and— oh, tryin' to think who hasn't been there. Sammy Davis hasn't been there [chuckling]; it's not his kind of thing. Bill Cosby's goin' next month. It's great for families. We got a lot of our stars up there, and they just love it. Paul Anka wrote a song in there. So they've all been there just about. You can almost tell by—like Sammy Davis doesn't like to get out of New York or Beverly Hills, you know. But depending, like Jim Nabors has been there six or eight times.

But it's very difficult now, unfortunately, with the new tax laws. And we can do it, but it's like you take Jim Nabors up there, and you have to talk about his new contract, which is phony as can be because we—you know, that isn't where you talk about contracts, you know. In fact, many of 'em, you don't even talk contract; you just go on year after year. The money's adjusted to whatever it should be, and it's just no discussion at all, especially with our relationship with our stars. Like Sammy Davis, we've never talked money yet with 'im. We gave him raise after raise after raise and not—we have a top figure. Sammy's been at it as long as we've had a top figure, so there's nothin' to talk about; just how many weeks he's gonna work. That's it.

But you can see how much I have to do in Idaho—goin' to Sun Valley and the various things there, and Pettit, and Stanley and all the things there, and Middle Fork, and goin' down the river, salmon fishing and—. I've been up there for the hunting season. One wife of mine liked to hunt. I just don't; I hunted in the old days, when I got talked into it. remember every animal I killed, and I regret it; I just don't like—. And I'd still fish, and people'd say, "Well, how come?" You know, you catch a salmon, you're killin' a salmon, and you kill a deer—what's the difference? I don't know, just a salmon's a fish, which, I don't know, they—I can't picture a fish even thinking up there. You know, I think they're all instinct or something, which maybe my thinking is faulty; but a deer's an animal and it has—you know. I remember I killed a antelope. And there was the papa and the mama, and I killed the stag or whatever it is, you know. And it was—I didn't hit it good; I hit it in the leg and broke its leg and it was tryin' to get up, and the other was there—what's the matter?— and just—you know, I spoiled a little happy family there. I've regretted it ever since, So I didn't

do that; I only went one year, just 'cause I got talked into it. And there is a race, and I respect 'em, you know; if they want to do it, fine. But there are hunters, you know, and, "Hey, you want to go kill somethin'?" And it's okay, and then it they wanna, it's their thing, not mine.

A LOVE AFFAIR WITH AUTOMOBILES

Few material things have been as important to America as the automobile. The manufacture of the automobile was the root of our industrial growth, and for decades now it has been the central support of our economic growth/economy. We are all tied to the automobile by history, business, by emotion. The automobile deserves to be preserved and remembered.

William F. Harrah

Would you comment?

Okay. I didn't write that. Well, I agree with it. Ken Purdy—I think I mentioned him one time, didn't I?—the writer and the car guy that I like very much. He's gone now. Really a brilliant man. He did an article, first article on me at HAC about some cars; and then he asked me my philosophy, and I said, "Huh?" So he wrote that out, and he said, "Do you agree with it?"—which I really believe in it, but he could talk better than I could.

What about the cars?

Why don't you start with the first car that you remember, and how you felt about it, and how you got interested in cars—collecting, or first driving. Then, you were at one time thinking about having a career as a car dealer. Just kind of the history of your interest.

I don't remember what is the first car I remember. I can remember, let's see—we had a 1916 Chalmers, which I think we bought in 1917. My father was pretty good at that—in buying good used cars. But I can remember that in '17, '50 I was six years old. And I remember other cars of the period; just I was really interested in cars, 'course. I remember the family cars better. We had the Chalmers; then about the same period we had a Mitchell roadster. My mother had a Scripps-Booth. Every family car we ever had I have a duplicate—or we have a duplicate of it in the Collection, just for old time sake. Then, there's just so many cars, it's hard to—.

It might just be kind of fun for you to think back and decide which car you really fell in love with, or whether you fell in love with automobiles as an abstract.

No, I liked—and all you can identify with is what you have contact with. And as we lived in Venice in this period, there weren't too many nice cars in that area. So the nice cars are the fancy cars that existed, but I didn't know about, because they didn't—. But I remember a Packard Twin Six that was in our area—or I saw in our area. The man didn't live there, but he drove by. And I can still remember that car the day I saw it, and I knew what it was. I'd heard about it, but twelve-cylinder car, wow! And for years, a Chummy roadster—that was a roadster with a little back seat—and people said, "What would you like if you could have anything you wanted?" For years it was a Packard Twin Six Chummy roadster.

Then our first Franklin was very impressive. That was 1922. And my father had been tryin' to buy a Franklin for several years, a good used one, and they were a very popular car, very expensive, and very high quality, and because of that there just weren't any good used ones available. So I remember he (what's the word you use when you're tryin' to make a decision and you can't do it and you worry about it—what's the word?) agonized. If he ever agonized, he agonized over that; buyin' that Franklin and payin', I think it was thirty-two hundred dollars. And I don't think he'd ever paid over fifteen hundred for a car in his life, or probably less. And thirty-two hundred at one whack! But he just thought and thought and thought, and finally he said, "By golly, I'm gonna buy it," and he did. So that was our first new car. And although they were known as an old man's car and they didn't perform too great, but as

you got to know them and as I grew up with them, I gained respect for them. Found that although they weren't as fast as some cars, they were very high quality and there was a good reason for their being.

That was the family car—the Franklin in '22. And then I think about '24-'25, I got a Model T Ford with another kid—just an old one—that we played with. Really was just a plaything—we didn't really drive it on the street; we were too young, anyway.

Then I wanted a car very badly, and in '25, we bought another Franklin, sedan. And then I wanted a car, and my sister wanted a car, and my father (I don't know, I never did figure out that deal) —he bought another Franklin touring car, same model, but it was a touring car. And that was for my sister and I to use, which wasn't our kind of a car and it really didn't work—it just kinda worked, 'cause he also used the car, so it was a three-way deal. And there was a constant turmoil about who was gonna get to use the car.

So then in '26, we moved to Hollywood, and I started in Hollywood High School, and it was some distance. Prior to that I could go to high school on the streetcar; it was very easy. But in '26 we moved to Hollywood, and it was several miles to school, and I really needed a car, which I didn't come out and tell him—I hinted about it, and finally he agreed.

And I got a '26 Chevrolet roadster, which I can remember very clearly the day we bought it and the day it arrived and the boxcar on the train and getting it out of the train and getting it home and all—that's just like yesterday. That was my first car. It was a pretty good car, for the period. I dolled it all up. All of this—see, the reason I'm hesitating, this has all been done so many times. Should I do it again?

Well, we'll try to get as much detail in here as possible. Tell now about the Chevrolet.

Oh yeah. I didn't do any mechanical work on it, but—oh, maybe a little—I could adjust the valves, but—. I left it real stock; it's the only stock car [chuckling] I think I ever had. But I dolled it all up appearance-wise. I lowered it, and I had special wheels which were an extra that came with the car, but I painted them a pretty color. And I had a lot of nickel work done on it—nickel plated the headlights, and I nickel plated the dashboard. And all those things I did myself in a way, like the headlight, I'd take it off and take the shell, separate it from the reflector, and take it down to the plater, and he'd nickel plate it, and then I'd put it back together and put it on the car—I did all of that.

Then that's the days of spotlights and roadlights and things, which still are, but they were a big thing then. And I remember the Chevrolet, I think it had twenty-six lights on it. 'course in stock it had five lights—two headlights, two sidelights, and one taillight—but I added roadlights and spotlights and running board lights and then another taillight and another stoplight and—. And I wasn't the only one; it was kind of the thing to do in those days—to light your car up pretty good.

And also I think I had eleven horns on it, something like that. It came with one horn, and then there were very fancy horns. It was a cow kind of a horn—sounded like a cow mooing, and then they had a Spartan (I forget the name)—it's a kind of a trumpet horn that was electric, and it played a tune—da cia da cia., something like that. I had one of those, and they were quite expensive. I think they were around thirty-five dollars. And I just saved my money and bought one; I wanted one so badly. And I was about the only—a lot of Lincolns and things had those on 'em, but I was about the only Chevrolet with those horns. But it was a curio, cute little car. And

I had a special exhaust pipe on it. And I remember it would go fifty-five miles an hour, and I drove it fifty-five miles an hour all the time. And, of course, I got a lot of tickets, but I never had any accidents; I was a very good driver. And like fifty-five in Hollywood with two-wheel brakes sounds kinda crazy, but there really wasn't too much traffic then so—. About all you had to really watch out for was the police. And they weren't really too active.

Then I drove it to a football game one time, and I didn't have a special lock on it. And any Chevrolet key would work it, and—or I may have left the key in the ignition, although I never did that, but I kinda think I may have that time 'cause I was late to the game, and I was running, and I was quite an ardent football fan. But anyway, it was stolen, and when it was recovered, it had been stripped of all the lights and the—what else was gone? It was stripped of about anything you could get off of it in a hour. But most of it was there. But it was recovered, and then I—it was my own fault. So I didn't have any money, and my father knew it was my own fault, so he didn't help me much. But I pieced together; I got a pair of headlights here, and I got a pair of this and that there and put it together, so it was an acceptable car. And I sold it. I forget what I started driving then. I think I was without a car for a little while. And then I got sick, so I was out of action for about a year. Then when I came back, I got a '29 Ford. It was really a need. And my father was real nice that time; it was time for another car, and he took me down and bought me just about what I wanted. And that's when I wanted to step up in class and get a—he said, "What do you want?"

And I said, "Well, a Chrysler 72," which was a fifteen-hundred-dollar car.

And he said, "Well, who do you know—" he told me that when I was a little boy, that

anything that my friends had I could have. So in the car he said, "What do you want?"

And I said, "A Chrysler."

He said, "Well, who do you know has a Chrysler?"

I said, "Well, nobody."

He said, "Who do you know that has a equivalent?" And I said Paul Graid, who had an Auburn. And he said, "But Paul Graid isn't your close friend. He's just an acquaintance." So then I named another boy that had a nice car. And he wasn't a close friend. He said, "Well, what does Todd Brown have?" Well, he had a Ford. "What does Harry Clamp have?" Well, he had a Chevrolet. So my father said, "Well, that's the kinda car you should have—in that class." He says, "You can get whatever you want, but it has to be in that class," so I picked the '29 Ford.

And I dolled it all up. I did a real good job on it. And I did the work myself; i put on special wheels and overhead valves. it was about a sixty-mile-an-hour car, and when I finished with it, it'd do eighty miles an hour. That's the one where I really got arrested every week. [Chuckles] And I told you that story, didn't I? [I think you did.] Yeah, that Harrah in Juvenile Court and all that.

I worked in a parking lot in Venice in 1926 for my father, which I really loved. We lived in Hollywood, and he owned the parkin' lot in Venice, and I wanted to go to work there. And, well, it's too far, but I went down every Saturday and Sunday. And I went home at night, so I'd go down Saturday in the morning and be there; things didn't get going till maybe nine or ten. But I had to take the streetcar from near where I lived in Hollywood clear down to Santa Monica down to Venice, which was a good hour or so. And then at night I would go back and—back and forth. But I remember I think I got fifty cents an hour. And we worked twelve to fourteen

hours a day, so I made real good money for a kid.

But the important thing was that all these different cars came in, and I was the only kid could drive them all. And the reason is because I d read up on all of 'em; before they even came in, I knew the shift on a Dodge, and I knew the shift— most cars had a standard shift, but there were a few oddballs like Franklin and Dodge and Buick, they shifted differently. Also the Model T Ford—I'd never driven a Model T. I'd read in the book how to drive it, and I had to teach myself how to drive a Model T which wasn't easy to do. But I did it. I could drive a Model T today, but it was—you have to hold the clutch halfway down, which is real tricky at first. We were surrounded by railroad tracks of the Pacific Electric; and I remember the first time I drove one, I couldn't stop it, and I drove right over the railroad track. And the other kids were lookin' at me like kind of weird, and I didn't want to admit I couldn't drive it, so I said I—some goofy story like I did it on purpose [laughs.] "Why?" I wanted to see how it rode or somethin', but—. I remember an awful lot of cars then; that was really fun.

Then in Hollywood, at Hollywood High School I worked in a parkin' lot there during school, and that was in the late twenties. And that was a real good experience because it was next to a theater, and our trade like the matinees was—well, matinee, we had a show; but then we had the shoppers. But at night it was all theater people, and that's when the Packards and the Lincolns and the Duesenbergs came in, and the Cords and—. I just loved my job. And I would've paid them for workin'. That's the one where I got paid double.

That's one of my favorite stories. Everybody got fifty cents an hour, and we were all even (there was about six or eight of us). But I loved

my job so much—plus there were some tips, pretty good tips—I mean a quarter and half a dollar— that I would—a car would drive in, and we would go up. We'd sell 'em the ticket 'cause we were issued tickets, which was customary, and they were numbered, so you couldn't cheat. And you would sell the man with—fifty cents for a park. I remember it was fifty cents, which was pretty high in those days. And then you'd put the ticket on the car and you'd give him a ticket, and you'd get in the car and drive it down and park it, and then come back and do it over again. And because I liked it so much, plus the tips, I guess, I would run real—all the kids'd run, but I'd run real fast. And I could drive so good that I could drive a car down and back it in, just in one motion—just go swish-swish [gesture]—no matter what I was driving and be out of the car and up. And so I was actually parking two to one. So the owner of the parkin' lot—he was a real interesting old fella, and he didn't come around too often. He had the manager who we all hated. We called him “Little Caesar.” But the owner was a real—we liked the owner, and we hated the manager. So he came around one time, or several times, and saw me working. So he told the manager to pay me a dollar an hour. And the manager—uh, da da da, “All the other boys get fifty cents; why should he get a dollar?”

And he said, “'cause he does twice as much work.” So he did; they paid me a dollar an hour, which I just loved. And we worked from, say, seven o'clock at night to eleven—yeah, that was it. (Was that right? No, the show started at eight-something'; so say, we worked seven-thirty to about ten-thirty. That's what?—three hours.) It was a four-hour shift, so say, seven to eleven. And the boys got two dollars (that was it) for the four hours. But I could work seven to nine, and I got two dollars. 'cause all you did from

nine o'clock on—or maybe it was eight-thirty when the show started, but there're always a few stragglers—you just watched the cars till the show broke, and then—. We did, like most places, they'll just let you come and get your car and not bother, but we bothered with the tickets. They kinda had to match up; and of course, if they didn't, we usually let 'em go, but, we just didn't let 'em go.

But we're supposed to be talkin' about cars [chuckles], but I remember that

This is part of your experience with cars. It's worth discussing.

Yeah, I remember one time, the first time I ever drove a Duesenberg, a man came in—that's one of my favorite stories. And there weren't too many Duesenbergs, and he came—. So very rare. And so this beautiful blue Murphy—we have one just like it, of course, only a different color—Murphy sedan came in, a real nice man driving it. There was a premier at the Chinese Theater which was across the street. Quite often, we got cars parked there because it was so crowded at the premier, and we were only a block away, and it was pretty neat. But then there was—you know, they had the kleig lights and all that. And all the stars would drive up in their limos and town cars and get out, and the stars, the lights—you've seen it on movies, I'm sure. So this fella came in his Duesenberg, and he was in a tuxedo, and his girlfriend and another couple, and they were all dressed real nice. So he looked us over; there were about six kids standin' there 'cause it was—I think our cars were all in, and we were five or six of us there. And they were all pretty sloppy 'cause when you worked, you could dress any way you wanted; but I had on my moleskins pants, I remember, which were dirty. We all—you know, moleskins, you didn't wear 'em till

they got dirty; that was the style. But I had on a white sweater and my collar outside the sweater. And it was a pretty white sweater, and it was real clean. I looked real neat. So I looked ten times better than the rest of the kids. So he said, "Come here." So I went over to him.

I said, "Yes, sir."

And he said, "We're goin' to the Chinese Theater," and he said, "here's what I want to do." He said, "We got this Duesenberg, and," he said, "I want to drive up in front. I want to show my car off" (he was real frank), "and get out." So he said, "Here's what I'd like to do." He said, "You drive up, you drive us up, and let us out, and then bring the car back here," and he told me where to hide the key; it was under the right front tire, I think. "Lock it up 'cause," he said, "wee re gonna be late." And he said, "That way, why, we'll drive up in our Duesenberg."

And I said, "Oh, gee, that'd be fine. Okay." And he gave me a dollar tip. So I got in; I'd never driven a Duesenberg before. We're lined up, you know—the traffic—and I squeezed in, got my place. And I knew how to start a Duesenberg, but I was so afraid that I might kill the engine, so I kept it revved up fairly well, but I didn't speed it up so much that it was goofy, where it would bug him. But I just had a horror of getting up in front and killing the engine.

But anyway, we drove up, and I'm in my white—and all the lights and the zzz and the microphone [gesture to mouth]— "Who's this," you know; and they go out, in they went. So I pulled out and didn't kill the engine—I was real proud of myself—and started down on Hollywood Boulevard. And I started to turn around and go back to the parking lot. And then I thought, "Well, gee whiz, he's in that show; he's gonna be in there for four hours. [Laughing] Maybe I ought to just

go a little further." So I did. I went down on Sunset Boulevard and drove. And I didn't hot rod it at all; I'm real proud of myself that way. But I drove it along real dignified, and 'course, other cars were comin' alongside, 'cause Duesenbergs were pretty rare. And they're lookin' at me, you know; and I looked straight ahead—I didn't look to the left or the right—and just drove. And once in a while I'd hear, "Ah, that's Bill Harrah! Hey, Bill!" And I'd drive—. I drove out on Sunset, I think clear out to the Strip, and turned around and came back. Then I was gonna go somewhere else, and then there would have been ten or fifteen minutes. And I got to thinkin', I was kinda guilty, so I took it back and parked it and did what he told me to. That was unbelievable—a Duesenberg in those days—it was bigger and far ahead of everything else. But we had Rolls Royces in there, and we had Bugattis—.

And quite often, you could park your own car (we allowed you to), but we also told 'em—and we had permission—to tell 'em it was against the rules because a lot of people come in and maybe just be a Buick or something, and "Oh, I want to park my own car," because it was new.

And we'd say, "Oh, no, sir, that's the rules—don't permit that." And one out of ten about would drive out, and the other nine would grumble, and then they'd let you do it. And the reason for that was, not that we wanted to drive the car, but it would take them forever to get around to where they were supposed to be, and then when they backed it in, and they'd be crooked, and it just really messed up everything. So we just said, no. But if a person really insisted—or, if they tipped [laughs], well, they could park their own car.

I remember a fella came in in a Bugatti Type 35, which is a real racing type car, although you could drive it on the street. But he came in and "Rrrrrrr" [making noise of

car]— said, “Where do you want it?” And there’s one I didn’t say ‘cause I was afraid I couldn’t drive it, ‘cause I’d never driven a Bugatti, and they’re entirely different or quite different. So I said, “Right here, Sir!” and showed him where to put it.

That’s when I started goin’ to auto shows. I can’t remember my first auto show, but it had to be in the ’20s. My father was just wonderful; he was a great father. He knew that I loved auto shows, and there was one every year in L.A., and we lived in Venice at first. And it was quite a ways, but he went out of his way and took me into the auto show and tagged around with me till he’d get bored. He liked cars but not—he wasn’t nutty; he just—. I’d spend all day, just about, and he’d patiently wait or say, “I’ll be here or there.”

I’d go with maybe a kid friend, get literature from every car, which, of course, kids still do that today. And sometimes they wouldn’t want to give you the literature ‘cause you were just a kid, so we knew where they hid it usually, and we went around in back and got it. And we’d have arms like that [gesture full] full. I kept that for years, and then moving around so much, I lost it. I think somebody threw it out. But ‘course we have copies today in the Collection; in our library, we have just about everything. But it would be nice to have had all those that I collected myself.

But the car story ties in—this is various periods, like we re up to ’29 Ford, and then I kinda jump along—I mean the family cars were Franklins, still. Our last family Franklin was a ’28, which we have a duplicate of. Then ’29, I had my Model A. My sister got a Model A Ford roadster. And we had the ’28 Franklin sedan. And then the Depression hit, so we quit buying family cars (my father did) until—he drove that ol’ Franklin until, I think, ’36, ‘cause I went from the ’29 Ford to a ’32 Ford, which I bought in ’33. And then in ’34, I bought a

’33 Ford. And then in ’36, I bought a Lincoln Zephyr; I was makin’ some money. And then I bought another Lincoln Zephyr for my mother, and that became the family car and replaced the Franklin. The ’28 Franklin went on to an associate of my father’s.

That Lincoln Zephyr—that was very advanced for its time. It was twelve-cylinder, and then the Lincoln Zephyr was just really a glorified Ford. But the name, the Lincoln part, was just a cash-in on the Lincoln prestige; but the Zephyr was more Ford than it was Lincoln. But the Ford was a V-8 at that time, and the Lincoln Zephyr was a Twelve, and it would—many Ford parts in it, like the transmission was like a Ford V-8 and the cylinder—I think the pistons were like a Ford V-8, except there were twelve of ‘em instead of eight of ‘em. And the rear end was like a Ford V-8. But because the car was very streamlined, it was very fast; it was only 110 horsepower, but it would go over a hundred miles an hour. That’s the one I drove when I first came to Reno. I came in my Lincoln Zephyr, which I just loved. I drove it over a hundred thousand miles. And I hopped it up, but not much.

You got into the insides of these yourself?

No, not really. I’d doll ‘em up like the—I had—the Zephyr had special paints, special exhaust, and I put a super charger on it. I didn’t do that; I went and found a man that could put a super charger on a Zephyr and had it done. But it didn’t work out very good. So then I went back to stock carburetors, but I think I had aluminum heads which were stock; but I think I did something to them—not much—‘cause it would go a hundred and five, but I think I got a hundred and ten out of it. It held the road very good. I drove it to Reno many times.

And actually in those days, when I was so young—when I was young—. I remember one time I worked in Venice—that’s when I was gettin’ ready to open up here; so I was signing leases and things, but I was still running my business in Venice. And I always drove; I didn’t fly. It just didn’t enter my mind; you just drove if you wanted to go somewhere. But I remember I had to come to do something, and I had to go back. So anyway, I worked a shift in Venice, and then I got in the Zephyr and drove up here and signed the paper or whatever I had to do, and drove back to Venice, and I think maybe worked a shift. But, you know, I’m sure you’re familiar with what you can do when you’re real—your early twenties, you can really move around. And I thought nothin’ of it. I didn’t even tell anybody, but somebody figured I—”Well, how did you get—?”

I said, “Well, I drove.”

“Well, what do you get? But you came right—.”

“Yes, ’course. I had my business done, so I drove back to Venice.”

But the only disadvantage I had, I drank. But I didn’t do too bad on the drinkin’. But I just loved driving so much that it wasn’t work, it was fun. Drivin’ that Lincoln Zephyr down the road ninety miles an hour was heaven. And I had so much fun with the cops in those days that—and I didn’t like gettin’ arrested, but it was kinda fun. I remember one time up by Bridgeport, there’s a real flat road up there where it straightens out after you go through the curves. Before you get into Bridgeport, there’s about, oh, ten miles there, or six miles, just almost straightaway. And that’s when the California cops used Chevrolets. And it was a six-cylinder Chevrolet, and it was a joke among us hot-rodders that they would—you know—eighty miles an hour was all they’d do—the police car. And of course, everything we drove was faster.

So I was cruising along at ninety-five or something on my way to Bridgeport, and I looked in the rearview mirror, and I could see the black and white way back there. So I thought, “Well, he’s after me.” It always enters your head, outrun ’em, and I thought, “Why, that’s dumb.”

So then I slowed down—I wasn’t sure what it was (that was it). They had other cars besides Chevies. So I saw the black and white; so I slowed down to about ninety, and he wasn’t doin’ any good. So then I slowed down to about eighty, and he held his own. So then I slowed down, I think seventy, and he moved up. So finally I slowed way down, and here he came, you know. And I was real honest with him. He said, “Do you know how fast you were goin’?”

And I says, “Yeah, ninety, till I saw you.” I said, “Then I slowed down to seventy.”

And he said, “Well, why?”

And I said, “So you could catch me!”

[Laughing] And it struck him kinda funny; he didn’t laugh. I think he even let me go, which was very rare in those days for that speed.

Then my favorite one is the one where I got stopped in—it’s between Bishop and Mohave. (There’s three or four little towns in there; I can think of it, but it’s not important.) But anyway, I was goin’ through there, and I was goin’—and usually I watched, and usually I didn’t get caught, but somehow I got caught, and I was doin’ eighty or ninety.

So then I was reading, and of course, I read the *LA Times* religiously. And there was an article in there on speed, and they mentioned this little town and the judge there. And he made speeches against speeders and reckless driving, and so and so and so and so, and that he was gonna start puttin’ people in jail (these speeders), that the fines didn’t work, so on and so on. And this was where I’d gotten caught. So I thought, “Oh brother, I’m in trouble!”

And then next day, there'd be a piece in the paper about this judge, and good for him—he was gonna slow down this slaughter, and da da da da da—you know how it goes. They still do it. So I got worried and worried, and I had to go next Tuesday. So I thought, "Well, boy! He's gonna put me in jail!" So I thought, "Well, I'll take"—you know, normal fine's twenty dollars or somethin', or fifty at the most—I thought, "Well, I'll take a hundred." Then I worried some more, and I thought, "Well, I'll take two hundred." And I worried some more—"Well, I'll take five hundred." I thought, "Well, gee, maybe I better take a thousand," which wasn't too easy, but I—you know—I maneuvered it all right. And I think I had it here and here and here [gesture like a money belt]. And I went up to him, and it was a little justice of the peace, and I went in and gave him my ticket. And nobody there—just him, you know.

So he said, "Okay, court's in session. Ninety miles an hour—hey!" And he said, "You go ninety?"

And I said, "Yes sir" [whispers].

And he said, "What kind of a car do you have?"

And I said, "A Lincoln Zephyr."

And he said, "Well, do you have a Columbia rear axle on it?" That was a two-speed rear axle, which, when you put it in the high side of it, it would really move along, and it would slow the engine down; it was like an overdrive. So it was very quiet, and the car would go just a little faster—not much, but it quieted it way down. So he said, "Do you have a Columbia rear end on that?"

And I said, "Yes, I do."

And he grinned, and he said, "I have a Ford V-B with one of those on it." And he said, "The darn things—you're goin' eighty miles an hour 'fore you know it, aren't you?"

And I said, "That's right!" [Whispers] [Laughs.]

And he said, "The least—I'm sorry, son—but the least I can do is ten dollars. [Laughs] Is that okay?"

And I said, "Yes sir." And then I had a terrible time tryin' to find the ten dollar bill without pullin' out [laughing] a whole roll! It's funny how things work out.

But then from the Lincoln Zephyr I went to a—that was '36. Then I was in Reno and in business, and 1940—(it was really '39, the new models'd come out) and I had some money then. And I was in the mood for a new car, and I'd 'course looked 'em all over; I knew what everything was going on. And the La Salle I liked—had beautiful lines—but it was a hundred and thirty-five horsepower. And the Packard Super Eight was a hundred and sixty horsepower, and it was the most powerful car you could buy in the United States; and Duesenberg had been out of business then. So Packard—there were I think Cadillac was a hundred and thirty-five, and Pierce Arrow was a hundred and thirty-five or forty; but Packard was a hundred and sixty.

So I went down, and I didn't really like the looks of the Packard, but I admired the horsepower. So I went down there one night; I'd been out all night, which isn't as bad as it sounds because, you know, I worked till two or three, and then we'd do the Golden and wherever, and as I say, I drank a lot, but I could still maneuver fine. So I was on my way home, and I stopped in at—it was Brown brothers had the Packard agency here. And—what's the fella's name?—let's see—one of the first fellas in the gaining control from Reno. Then he moved to Vegas. Bob Cahill was the salesman. We still kid about that.

And he come out, and he had on a—here I'm dressed real swingin', and I had a girlfriend—and he come out with his blue double-breasted suit. And I'll never forget he had a hat on top of his head, a goofy-lookin'

hat—real dignified and a tie. And he was the salesman. So I went in, I looked at the Packard, and I asked a lot of questions. I knew all about the car, but I was kinda showin' off. And he couldn't answer too many; he was one of those fellas that was interested in other things, but was between jobs, so he'd become a car salesman for a little while. So he didn't know too much about it, but he was a real nice guy. So I—"I want a demonstration."

So we went out on South Virginia, and I'm rr-rr-rr, and he's holdin' on, lookin' worried. I put the girl in the back seat; he was up front with me. And I'm workin' the overdrive and everything, so he said, "Well, are you interested?" He was real polite. And he said, "Are you interested in this car?"

And I said [gruff], "Well, I'll tell you what I'll do!"—big shot. And I guess it was for the girl's benefit too, and also I liked the car. I said, "If it'll go a hundred miles an hour, I '11 buy it." So South Virginia was just a two-lane road, then; you couldn't do it there. But where you could was turn on the road to Virginia City. And it gave you a little— you know, a little downhill run there, and then where you got where it kinda leveled out, you could actually tell what a car would do; I'd had a lot of cars there. And then, of course, you went into an upgrade, but when you hit the very level part, and by then you'd had a nice run, so that was the ultimate the car would do. And I remember it did a hundred and five.

So he had a big grin on his face, and I started sweatin' 'cause I really couldn't afford the car, and I knew it. And so I drove back, and I thought, "Well, I love the car, but I can't afford it." You know, I got a business, and—. So I went in and the Brown brothers—I don't know—I suppose you knew them.

There were two of them, and one—I can't remember their names—but one of 'em was pretty nice. And oh, the boss was really a

typical car dealer. So I didn't want to buy the car, so they asked what I wanted on it, and I told 'em all the accessories, and it was a whole bunch of 'em—spotlights and heater and overdrive and so on, so on, so on, and so on. So they added it all up, and it came to I think thirty-three hundred dollars (something like that). So they showed it to me—thirty-three hundred. I says, "Okay, what do you take?"

And they said, mmm mmmm—you know how car people talk— da da da. So—"Make an offer."

So I thought, "Well, I don't want the car; I can't afford it, so I'll make an offer they won't take. So I thought, "Three thousand—well, they'll take that." And I thought "Twenty-eight hundred—they might take that." And I thought, "Twenty-six hundred—they won't take that." I thought, "Well, I'll go twenty-five hundred, and I know they won't take that."

so I'm talkin' to the brother, not the big shot, the other brother. I said, "Twenty-five hundred."

And he looked at me like "Are you crazy?" And he—"Sheesh!" But he said, "I'll go ask so-and-so." So he went in and asked his brother. And he came out, and he says, "You got a deal!" [Laughs] It was either twenty-five or twenty-six—I forget, but it was way less than the—.

So then I had to finance it; I didn't have the money. And they could do it there—that was okay, and I had the down payment. But they—it was really funny—and a story about Fernet. Are you familiar with Fernet? It's a bitters that every bar in Reno has, and they had in those days. And when you had a hangover, a real bad hangover—and that's where I learned it, in Reno—was you go in and have a shot of bitters. And it's Italian, and it's not a—I thought it was a liquor— it isn't; it's a medicine, a form of medicine. Terrible taste. And it will, it'll settle your stomach

when nothing else will. Fernet—Fernet de branca [Fernet Branca], I think it is. So I'd taken Fernet—not too often, but when I—.

But anyway, they said, "We'll draw up the papers for ya. And it was real long; it was in quadruple (whatever), the girl's typin' away. And "Packard Super Eight," so and so, "and a heater, spotlights," so and so, da da da, special this, special that, "seat covers," so and so, on and on, "clock—." So it was pretty long. So then went up, and I went to sign the papers; and I really had the shakes (I'd been out all night), plus I was nervous. So I went in and like this, and I went to sign my name, and I went like that [gestures shaky hands, messy paper] all over the paper. So I ruined 'em. So I—"Oh, I'm sorry," and I really was.

And they said, "Oh, no, no, no problem. We'll have the girl do it again."

So I went down and I waited, and it took her quite a while (she maybe wasn't too good), got 'em all—tour of 'em lined up with all the paper in between, and she's typin' away, da da da, so it's fifteen minutes, seems like. So they brought 'em out, and so I went over and I did it again. And I didn't want to tell 'em I had this awful hangover, plus the shakes—which I really was, so I told 'em. I said, "I'm excited." I said, "This is the nicest car I ever owned." And I said, "I'm just excited about ownin' it." So I said, "I'm awfully sorry." I said, "Make out another set of papers and let me walk around the block, and then I can do it, I'm sure; I'll relax."

So instead of walkin' around the block, I went across the street, which there's still a bar there; I think it was Charlie's then. But there was a bar there, and Charlie was there, I think; and so I went in. I said, "Give me a Fernet." I drank Fernet with a little whiskey. So I had two of those; I knew what'd do it and how to do it 'cause I'd done it before with a coke chaser. And it would just taste awful. But in

about ten minutes, your stomach would quit churning and your shakes'd go away; and that's a fact of life. In fact, I introduced my wife to it when she has a terrible upset stomach, which doesn't happen too often, but when she does—.

So anyway, I went back in and they had the papers again. By then they're thinkin', "What—we're gonna lose this deal; the guy can't even write." So all the Brown brothers are there and everybody, and the office manager, you know—they put 'em down; I had quite an audience. And I just went [gesture, steady hand, head up] like this. My '40 Packard. [Laughs]

So then I got into Packards; I liked them very much 'cause they would outrun everybody. But they were kinda funny lookin'. So then in '42, they came out with a good-lookin' Packard. I forget the model number, but it had the same engine; well, I think it was a hundred and sixty-five horsepower. It was a Clipper, Packard Clipper. And of course, I have one like it in the museum. I bought one of those. That's the one I cracked up on the bridge down here and broke my neck.

Then after that—that was '42, and I drove that through the war; and then '46, I bought another Packard, which I have one like. That was a seven-passenger sedan, and I don't know why I bought a seven-passenger sedan. But I wanted a big car— and just me and my girlfriend; I wasn't married or anything. And I had this huge, big, black seven-passenger Packard. But it would go good too; it wouldn't accelerate as good as the other—and I hopped that one up pretty good. And that had an overdrive, of course; so that would do a hundred and ten with no trouble at all. And I remember I bought it, and then I thought, "You're goofy buyin' a big—" it was black—big, black—you know, and here I am still in my twenties, I guess— '46—no, I was thirty-

five. Thirty-five, yeah. I had this huge car, so kinda lookin' at myself, well, I liked it and all, but it's a dumb car for a single guy.

But I went to L.A. one time, drove it down—a friend of mine, Freddie Vogel, down there invited me to the Rose Bowl game. I remember by then, I'd acquired License Number 8 on it. So this big, black Packard with License Number 8, it looked pretty important. (I remember it was pretty good with the cops.)

But anyway, we went, Freddie and I and our wives or girlfriends had gone out the night before. So we slept late. And we got up and we were in Hollywood, and like the game starts at two o'clock or somethin' and it's one-thirty, and we have to get out to Pasadena. So we started out, and of course, I hate to be late, and I was real nervous. But by then the Rose Bowl [parade] was over and the football crowd was gone, so there was nobody on the roads. So we went sailin' out there, and we got there and I think the game had just started.

But here's this huge parking lot and the stadium's full of people, and we drove in, and of course, there were parking attendants and police. And all the places are taken, just, you know, I thought, "Where the hell am I gonna park?" Just full. But being courteous, I said, "Let me drive you up to the gate." We had good tickets right near the fifty-yard line, so I drove 'em right up there. And there were a whole bunch of limos parked there—Cadillacs and Packards and chauffeur-driven. So as I drove up in this big, black Packard with a License Number 8, they saw me coming. And I dropped the friends of f; so when I pulled around, they pulled me right over [gesture] [laughs] with the other limos, just—I didn't ask; they just pulled me in there. So I got out just like I—sometimes I can act pretty good. So I backed it in there just like I was meant to park there, and I got out and kinda halfway

saluted "thank-you" [laughing], went into the game. And of course, they're goin' like that [chin drops]—the chauffeur's goin' with the other people! But I remember—and hey, doesn't it pay to have a low number and a big, black car (or it was dark blue)! That was my last Packard.

By then I'd started goin' to Idaho. Well, I had another Packard that I'd bought, a used Packard, that I still have. That was a 1938 twelve-cylinder, convertible coupe that I got about 1940. That was my "extra" car. I drove it around Reno quite a bit. And I drove it to Idaho. That was a hundred and seventy-five—that was a twelve cylinder; they quit building that in '39. So when I started buyin' new Packards, the twelve was gone, and the one-sixty was the hottest car you could buy. This '38 convertible coupe was a beautiful car, and I still have it; it's in the museum. And I bought that from George Carr. He was a car dealer. But that was his personal car. And I bought from him; then he tried to buy it back, I remember, 'cause it was such a neat car. It had been owned originally here by Judge (can't remember his name). He was a retired judge from the east. He used to play Bingo with us a little bit. But anyway, no matter.

Then when I started goin' to Idaho, I drove the Packard convertible coupe first time, but it was not practical for that. Then I had the limo, which was practical—it had a lot of room, but it just didn't fit in Stanley, Idaho, this big, seven-passenger limousine.

So then my next car was a '49 Mercury, which was a real pretty car. It had a wooden—a station wagon. And I hopped it up, put everything on it. I had dual exhaust and overdrive and high compression heads, Offenhauser heads, and special carburetors. But it was very disappointing. I remember it was a hundred and ten horsepower, but it was kinda balky. And I had a terrible time

gettin' a hundred miles an hour; I don't think it would really do a hundred. So I—worried me a lot, too, that, you know, I was used to havin' a car that would do a hundred easy, and this Mercury, you just had to push your foot through the floor, and it would barely do it. So I thought, "What—." By then the Chrysler V-B had come out with the hemispherical heads. And up till then, Cadillac had gone to a hundred and sixty horsepower, which was the hottest car you could buy, and Packard was a hundred and sixty. And this hemi Chrysler came out, and it was a hundred and eighty horsepower. And it was way detuned; it was really more horsepower than that. So it was a wonderful engine. And it was the hit of the year, the overheads, the Chrysler hemi. In fact, they still use 'em in dragsters—the Chrysler hemi. It's a wonderful engine.

So I thought, "Gee whiz, I'll put a Chrysler hemi in my Mercury." So I had a friend of mine in Hollywood do it. And he put it in, and he wasn't too good a workman. He was a friend of mine, and he hopped up a lotta hot dragsters and things, but he did sloppy work. He would get the engine in, but he would do it; and he'd cut here and he'd cut there, and it wasn't (as we call) sanitary; it was a bum job. So he got the engine in, and it would go wonderful—a hundred and thirty, somethin' like that. But the frame kinda bent and broke, and we fixed this and we fixed that, and it was just a lot of trouble. it would go good, but it was just bad news.

And I'll never forget, a friend of mine, a car fella, Elliot Wiener (for what it's worth, it really doesn't matter—the name). But he had some cars, and I was kinda promotin' him to get 'em. So he invited me to dinner at his house. And he lived in Pacific Palisades; he had a very wonderful house and nice wife and wonderful bunch of cars. And he had plenty of money. The only reason he talked

about sellin' 'em (and we've acquired quite a few from him) was he just was getting out of it and doing less and less.

But anyway, I was having dinner with him, and part of the conversation i made at dinner, I can still remember it. He said, "What do you drive?" Oh, I'd driven up in a Mercury. And I showed him the engine. So he's at dinner; he said, "How do you like that car?"

And I said, "Well, it's wonderful. It'll go [a] zillion miles an hour. But," I said, "when Max put the engine in, why, he cut the frame, and now I have trouble fixin' this because it's just bad news." And I says, "I don't know what to do!" I said, "Goin' to Idaho all the time, I gotta have a station wagon; it's the only way to go up there. But," I said, "I also have to go fast." I said, "I just don't know what I' in gonna do."

And Elliot, who was a real straight-to-it fella, he said, "Why don't you buy a Chrysler station wagon?"

And believe it or not, the idea'd never entered my mind. Chrysler was building a very beautiful station wagon with a hemi engine. And I just went like that—"So! Thank you!"

So I came to Reno and immediately bought, I remember it was a '52 Chrysler wagon, which I just loved. And I hopped it up—just a little. I put dual carburetors on it; I put dual exhaust and dual carburetors, and I believe it would go close to a hundred and thirty miles an hour. I remember I used to cruise it at about ninety, just beautifully, and it got good gas mileage at that speed. That was when I was on the board of directors of the Horseless Carriage Club—the national Horseless Carriage Club, whose headquarters [are] in L.A. And they had a monthly meeting, and I was on for three years. I attended every meeting in L.A., and I drove down every meeting [chuckles]. So that's thirty-six trips to L.A., and most of it was in the Chrysler wagon which I just loved.

And in '54 I bought another Chrysler wagon, another Chrysler wagon which wasn't as good. it was practically the same car, but I made a mistake. The '52 had two two-barrel carburetors, which was all the carburetion the car needed. When I got the '54, I thought, "Well, I'll put more on." There's where I learned a lesson about carburetion. So I put two four-barrels on. And one four-barrel or two two-barrels would've done fine, but I had two four-barrels, so I had too much carburetion. And too much carburetion, the car won't run as good as it will with the proper amount or with even a little. So the '54 was a little disappointment. i liked it, but it wasn't as good as the '52.

So then in '55, Chrysler came out with a 300. That was a high performance coupe; it would do a hundred and thirty miles an hour. So I bought one of those. And that was when we went to the take, so it just worked out so timely 'cause I had to run up there a lot. In my Chrysler 300 I would really get up there and back in a hurry.

And I have a favorite story there, as there was no speed limit between Carson and Reno, and of course, I drove pretty fast. And no one bothered me, while there was no speed limit. But I remember one time, I—around about halfway, where those brothers have that restaurant there—Pagnis, I was comin' down there at a hundred and thirty, and I think it is—well, it was the edge of Washoe County because this deputy picked me up. I saw him coming, and whatever he was driving, he couldn't catch me, of course. So I just kept going; there was no speed limit, and I was driving all right. I was drivin' good; I wasn't drunk or anything. So I drove on into Reno. And when I hit the—he was still coming, chasing me, with his red light and everything. And I didn't stop because I wasn't doin' anything illegal. But then I got to the

first speed zone, and I don't know—forty-five or fifty-five (whatever it was)—and I slowed down to the forty-five. And—so then he caught me, and he pulled me over. So what had I done? Nothing.

But he came out—he was a young fella and he was hot-tempered. He was red in the face, and he came over [waving arms, growling], "Are you—?" And I just listened. And, "You goin'—."

I said, "There's no speed—."

"Oh, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, reckless driver!"

I said, "I—oh, I wasn't a reckless driver. I only passed one car from the time I saw you." And he was doin' eighty, so I said, "I never pass a car over ten miles differential. So I passed him at ninety; then I speeded up again to a hundred and thirty. Don't."

He said [gruffly], "You follow me! And so he took me in to the sheriff's office. So I went in, and got in front of the sheriff's office; and he got me out of the—"Come on " you know—he was almost rude. But I've learned, fortunately, that those kind of people, you just do what you're told, you know. So I went in. He says [gruffly], "Sit there." So I sat down, and he went in to the sheriff, who was Bud Young, who, of course, I knew—and closed the door. "Bu bu bu bu bu." And I can hear and I can see through the glass kinda. "Bu bu bu bu yah." And so it's ten minutes or something.

So finally, Bud came out, and he said, "Hi, Bill."

And I said, "Hi, Bud." And we shook hands.

And Bud—he didn't say, "I'm sorry about this," but he said, "Hope it wasn't too inconvenient for you. Go ahead" [laughs]. And now I went, and the guy's just sittin' there like this [tense, shaking], you know. And he actually—I think he quit his job the next week because he was one of those go-by-the-book

guys, you know. And if the sheriff is gonna let people go, well, what the hell the sense of tryin' to enforce the law, so—. Anyway, I walked out.

Bud was so neat. I remember whenever he'd serve you with a paper, he'd be so apologetic.

That was the '55 Chrysler 300. Then in '56 they come out with a Chrysler 300-B, and the 300 was the horsepower. That was why it was called the 300. And the 300-B was three hundred and forty horsepower. And 300-C, which I got the next year, was three hundred and seventy-five horsepower. It was the same car, just about, 'cept it had dual headlights. But they were the hottest car on the road; they would go a hundred and thirty miles an hour. The hemi was very expensive to make because of the design. And the engines like Cadillac was using, and Ford by their Lincoln, they were overhead valve, too, but they weren't hemis, so they were cheaper. So all us Chrysler guys really loved the hemi. Then in '59, they abandoned the hemi and came out—and they had another name for it, and it sounded pretty good (it was a fancy name). But it was the same design—they got away from the hemi head because of costs and went to this other design, which was just another engine. And they called it three hundred and some horsepower, but it really wasn't. That was—they built the 300 through each, I think. See, I went through D, and then there was a E, F, C, H; and I think that was the last, 'cause people finally caught on it.

I was real interested in speed, of course, and performance, and I'd been reading about Ferrari over the years. But there were real—see, a Chrysler 300 cost about five thousand dollars. I'd been readin'! about Ferrari and how they performed; they were a hundred and forty to a hundred and fifty miles an hour. But they were eighteen thousand

and twenty-three thousand and all sorts of goofy numbers—so just unthinkable. Then Ferrari started advertising a little bit in the automotive newspapers and magazines. And there was a dealer in L.A., in Hollywood. What was the name of it?—huh. That's kind of important; I'll get that.

So I went down there, and I went by the agency just to look at the car. I had no thought of buying one, but I was very tempted. So I went in and I looked at 'em; they had several there. And it was a beautiful car. And Richie Ginther, who is a famous race car driver, and was at that time, was the sales manager. He was the whole sales force, too. But he asked me—he came up very polite and asked me if I wanted a demonstration. And I said, "Yes."

So we went out, and he took me up on Mulholland Drive in Hollywood. And I was very familiar with Mulholland Drive because I was raised there, and I knew what you could do on Mulholland Drive in a '26 Chevy or a '29 Ford or a '36 Lincoln. I'd been all over it, and I knew just what you could do. And he took me in this Ferrari over the same road at double the speeds I'd ever ridden. And of course, he was a super driver; he was a Grand Prix driver. But that plus the car was just unbelievable. And he let me drive it, 'course, and it handled beautifully, and the performance and acceleration and just—I'd never driven a car like that. The Chrysler 300s—it made them feel like an old truck or something. And Chrysler barely met it.

So we went back to the agency, and I was really tempted. And I said, "How much is it?" And it was twelve thousand, five hundred dollars. And they only had—they came in steel and aluminum (the Berlinetta), which I knew. And this one I'd been driving was—and it was red [chuckles], but it was aluminum, and it was the only one they had. And it came out in the conversation either before

or after I asked the price, it was the only one they had and it would be a little while before they'd get some more. And of course, the aluminum was a little lighter than the steel, which meant a little better performance, although they'd still go to a hundred and forty. But I was— you know, I—well, it was the only one and it would—had chrome wire wheels. So twelve thousand five hundred. So I said, "Okay." And I had the money, all right, and I wrote him out a check, but I remember saying to myself like when I did it or soon afterwards, you know—it's almost like when you wake up with a terrible hangover, you think, "What a damn fool I was!" And "God, I'm payin' twelve thousand five hundred for—" And today, let's see '58, that would be like—well, it'd be like payin' a hundred and fifty thousand today, or something— just, you know, somethin' you don't think about, but you go ahead and do it. And you look at yourself in the mirror, and you think, "God, do I have control of myself?"

Then I drove it back. And there's another funny story. And it's just wonderful—I still have the car. I got my next Ferrari; I sold the first one, but then later I chased it down and bought it back, and it's a wonderful car today. But it was so funny, the headlight switch, you pull it out and you turn it—in other words, you can't pull it out and the headlights go on; you have to pull it out and turn it and pull it out. And that's the headlights. And the reason for that is so that your knee can't hit it and bump it and turn 'em out, because you have to turn it and push it, which is real good. But also, in doing that, I think you turn it one more notch which turns the taillights on, which is dumb—the taillights should come on with the headlights. But for some reason they do a lot of things like that in European cars, especially Italian, that don't make sense, but that's the way it's done.

So I turned on the lights, and I looked and the taillights weren't on, and I couldn't figure out how to turn them on. And we're driving back to Reno; I was with [Edward A.] Bud Catlett, I remember. We just started out for Reno, and we had dinner or something, and then we turned the lights on and noticed the taillights weren't on. And we tried and couldn't figure out how to turn 'em on. So we just figured they were burned out. So we're going, and it's dusk (it wasn't dark, but it was dusk); but we had our headlights on—everyone had their headlights on. And we're cruising a hundred and thirty or something, and real happy—not much traffic—and the car's just running like a dream, you know, and we're "Oh, what a wonderful—oh!" and "Oh!" And it's just happy as it can be, you know, at a hundred— cause it wasn't nearly flat-out. And just fun. And so we came up and here's a police car up ahead with his lights flashin', and he's out in the middle of the road and he pulled over. So he pulled us over [gesture], and I rolled down my window, and I said, "What do you want?"

And he said, "Well, there's a fella behind ya—." And this other police car had been followin' us, but he couldn't catch us. So he came up, so I thought, "Oh, brother," and the other cop had told me that; he said, "There's somebody followin' you, but he couldn't catch you, so he called ahead." And I thought ooh—.

So this fella showed up—a policeman—with his red light and all, and he got out and came over, and I thought, "I'm in trouble."

And he said, "I've been tryin' to catch you for fifteen miles."

And I said, "Well, uhh—. And there was speed limit in California. I said, "Well, uhh—."

And he said, "Oh, I wasn't concerned about your speed." He said, "You're drivin' a Ferrari." He said, "That's a wonderful car. So I'm not concerned about that. But," he

said, “your taillights are out, and I was tryin’ to catch you to tell you your taillights—” [laughs].

So then we asked him, well, how to turn ‘em on, or they’re out. And so two cops and me and Bud, we kept playin’ with it until we turned it one more notch and pulled it, and then the taillights went on. So then everybody’s happy, and away we went. See, like a lot of cops do—they’ll give you a ticket—most of ‘em—but a lot of ‘em do appreciate a real quality car, you know. Fact, more than once I’ve done that, and especially with the antiques; but with modern sports cars, have a cop pull me over, and I think, “What the hell did I do?” And he’ll come up and say, “Excuse me, sir, I—could I look at the engine,” you know. “I hope you’re not in a hurry, but I just—I’ve never—” you know. And you lift the hood, and they admire it; and then they say, “Thank you very much,” and go ahead.

So that’s up to the Ferraris. And I’ve had Ferraris ever since, with a mixture. Always had a station wagon because of going to Idaho. I got my first Jeep in ’64, which is the ideal car for that. Prior to that, of course, I had the Chryslers. And I had the Jeep wagon ever since, at least one. And then, of course, I acquired the dealership a couple of years ago, which was—I’d always wanted a dealership; but it was just one of those things that came along, and it was for sale, surprisingly. I bought it, and it’s been very successful. And it’s fun, too. I love bein’ a Jeep dealer, and they go so good, and there’s money in ‘em; and we’re Number Two in the country. We were Number One one year; we worked extra hard. But then this fella on the east coast that has three dealerships that he runs as one, so no way we can compete with that. So we beat him one year, but we kinda had to work harder than we wanted to work. We had to

make deals we didn’t want to work, so it’s not worth it.

Then, getting back to Ferrari. Soon after I got my Ferrari, the dealership became available in Reno. I’d already had the Rolls dealership, which—that’s another story—let me go into Rolls: I’d always admired Rolls Royces, the limousine. And I bought a Rolls Royce for my wife which she liked very much, and I got to likin’ it. I thought, it was kind of a, oh, old man’s car or something. But I discovered with a Rolls Royce V-B that came out in 1960—I think we bought a ’61 Rolls Royce—I bought one for her, and we drove it to Arizona and around, and it was hundred and fifteen-mile-an-hour car, but you could cruise it at ninety with no trouble. And I remember one time we were in Phoenix, and we drove—we’re coming back to Reno; we’d driven down, stayed a few days. So we drove to Las Vegas, which was three hundred and some miles, I believe. It was quite a ways, and we planned to stop in Vegas. When we got to Vegas, we were feeling just wonderful. And I was still young, but no kid. So I told my wife, I said, “Well, gee, I feel good. Why don’t we go on a ways. So we’ll go to Tonopah or something.” So we got to Tonopah, and we still felt—I felt wonderful. So I drove to Reno, and I still felt—. That was a thing in Rolls that I never experienced before. And my Ferraris, they would go fast and all, and ray Chryslers, but they were noisy, and there was—it would wear on you. You didn’t realize it was wearing. But the Rolls Royce with its silence, and its easy handling, and all that, you could just—it was so easy to drive that you could put in more. But I remember this time, we drove to Reno when we’d only planned to go to Vegas. And we arrived in Reno, and I think it was about five-thirty at night. And we felt real good, and I said, “Well, hey, you

want to see the show at the Lake?” cause it was a show we hadn’t seen.

So “Yeah, why not?” So we went in the house, changed our clothes, and drove to the Lake, saw the show, and drove back to Reno. And when I got back to Reno at eleven o’clock at night, I just felt wonderful. And that was my first introduction to the reason why a Rolls Royce, besides the radiator and all that sort of thing that it does, it is so well designed that it’s very restful to drive.

So soon after that, I don’t know if I approached them or they approached me—I think it was my idea, ’cause I wanted to buy a Rolls limo, Phantom Five (which is a wonderful car), and I went down to Kjell Qvale, who was the west coast distributor for Rolls Royce—he still is. So I think it was thirty thousand dollars at the time. And I had a demonstration, and I liked the car, and I went up to his office and—no salesman; just he and I. And I said, “What’ll you take for it?” or something like that. I didn’t put it that crudely. And it was a shock to him ’cause apparently he hadn’t discounted any Rolls, or at least he said he hadn’t.

And he said, “The price is thirty thousand dollars.”

And I—you know, we got into some words, and I said, “Well, you know, I—every car I buy I get a discount.”

And he said, “Well, you don’t on a Rolls Royce.”

And I said, “Not even a thousand dollars?” I can’t remember if I got the thousand or not; I kinda don’t think I did, ’cause I remember it was very unhappy.

In the meantime, there’d been a hint of some kind from somebody (I don’t know if it’s from Kjell or not) that they’d like to have a Rolls Royce dealership in Reno. And I really didn’t want to go into the car business. I liked cars, and I had many opportunities

before to get into it, like the Chrysler and the Packard and all that. And I thought, “Oh, poohy,” ’cause I did value my time, and I valued my time in Idaho, and I didn’t have too many executives then; it was kinda me doin’ most of it. So, I just thought, “Well, if I have a car agency, then that’ll take my time.” And I would’a had a manager, but I knew I’d be right in the middle of it; so I turned down many. But I think I took the Rolls. And either they offered it to me, or they hinted at it. Or maybe it even came from Rolls Royce because I’d bought—I bought three in London, which made a big hit.

But anyway, I got the dealership for Reno and for Rolls Royce, which was a fun thing because the company bought quite a few Rolls limos. And they would go, so that made money for the company. And I bought them, Harrah’s could buy ’em as cheap as they could otherwise, so it was a pretty good deal. And my wife, who liked Rolls Royces, she got a new Rolls Royce every once in a while. So it was a real nice situation.

But then the Ferrari worked rather similar. I was offered that, and also as a good customer, ’cause I’d bought another Ferrari in the meantime—plus the Ferrari distributorship had changed hands, so they were looking for dealers. So I took on the Ferrari dealership, which didn’t work too good at first because of politics. The owner of the Ferrari distributorship had started—it’s a success story. His name was John Von Neumann, and he’d started with a little MG, one MG, in Hollywood. And I think he’d sold MGs and made a little money. And then Volkswagen came along. He was one of the first Volkswagen dealers, and that’s when the “Bug” came. And he was an excellent dealer, and he acquired the distributorship for southern California. And any Volkswagen dealership was almost guaranteed to make

you a million dollars when they were hot, and a distributorship had made him a multimillionaire, and he was quite a young man. So he'd acquired Ferrari as a fun thing, as he loved sports cars. And he was a great driver. I've seen him drive in races, and he was some—you see a lot of celebrity drivers, but he was a true driver. He could really drive, Johnny Von Neumann.

But he was married, and they divorced. In the divorce, she acquired the Ferrari distributorship, which was real bad news because she didn't like the car, and she didn't like—. And I had a man that I'd appointed my manager, and she didn't like him because he had gone with her daughter or something. And she wanted me to fire him, and I wouldn't fire him because of that. And because I wouldn't fire him, she wouldn't give me any cars. And actually no cars, not—. And I'm a dealer, and she wouldn't give me any Ferraris. So I went to the factory about it. You know, I hinted; I said I couldn't believe it was gonna really happen. And then finally I went to the factory, and they couldn't believe it. And they said, "Well, she has to give you cars."

And I said, "Well, she hasn't." And this went on for about a year. And here I'm a Ferrari dealer, and I didn't have any cars. So finally, the Ferrari factory started selling me cars direct, which is unheard-of when there's a distributor. But they would sell her cars as a distributor, and then they'd sell them to me as a dealer at the dealer's costs, which was fine.

Then I tried to buy the distributorship. And she wouldn't talk to me; she wouldn't, this-and-that. And I was very active as a Ferrari dealer. So then later, the factory bought her out 'cause she was giving such terrible—not only me, but she was selling Ferraris to her friends, and if you weren't her friend you couldn't get one, and just—she was really messin' it up. And the dealers were

quitting right and left, and it was total disaster. So Ferrari revoked her distributorship, and I think they paid her for it to get out 'cause she was a mean woman. So it was there, and they ran it for a while. And I was a dealer under them, and it was much better.

So then one day, just out of a clear blue sky, they said, "Would you like to be the distributor?"

And I said, "Well, of course. I'd love to be the distributor. I could do a good job."

And they said, "Okay. When do you want to start?"

And then so I said, so-and-so. And I thought, "Well, I wonder what they want for it." So I thought, "Well, they'll tell me." So I said, "Okay, sure, fine." So we went ahead, and to this day they haven't asked me anything! [Chuckling] I don't think they're going to; it's been ten years now, I guess. And we have I think twenty dealers now all over—we have west of the Mississippi, which is real nice.

There are the three agencies—well, I'll repeat that. One is American Motors and Jeep; and the other is Rolls Royce, BMW, Aston Martin, Peugeot, Fiat, and Ferrari. And the other agency is Mercedes Benz and Datsun. And there's one in Ketchum, Idaho which is Jeep and American Motors and Volkswagen, Porsche, and— (what's that other car? It's on the tip of my tongue. It'll come. It's another German car). That tells the cars; that's enough of that.

That's more the dealer end. Well, today, I drive Ferraris and Jeeps and whatever. I believe in a car, the ideal car for the purpose, like a sports car—two people to go from here to the Lake in nice weather, why, there's nothing better than a Ferrari sports car. But then to take six people up to the Lake or six guests, why, there's nothing like a Rolls limousine or a Cadillac (there's a lot of nice limos; we have Lincolns, Cadillacs, and Rolls

Royces) with a chauffeur—that's the way to do that. And then, like, say, when there's four of you—doesn't work in a Ferrari; they have a little back seat, some of 'em, but it's just too crowded.

So the ideal car in my opinion today is the Mercedes, as a sedan. The Mercedes has always been a quality car and a pretty good performance car, not a real hot one. They came out with a sports car in '55, a gull-wing, which was a hundred and thirty-mile-an-hour car (I remember that). And I drove one; in fact, a doctor here in Reno had one, and he let me drive it. And I thought, "Wow!" And it really handled nicely. But it was only two-passenger, and I was into bigger cars then; plus it was—it went very well, but it didn't pull your head off like a Ferrari. But I thought about it, thought about it. Then in '68, I believe, they had—. Well, prior to that, Mercedes came out with a big limo and a big sedan and a big limo with a 6.3 engine in it (that's liters), which was two hundred and fifty-some horsepower, and it was a real hot performer. Well, the limo would go (we had one for a while) —it would do about a hundred and twenty. And the sedan would do about a hundred and twenty-five, a hundred and thirty, well maybe a hundred and twenty-five. I had one of those, and it was a very nice car. I liked it, but it was not a big thing.

Then in '68, I believe, they had the smaller one, the 450 and the 280, which they have today. And it was big news—they put the 6.3 engine in the 450 chassis, limo, so it became the hottest sedan in the world overnight. A regular Mercedes sedan would do a hundred and thirty-five miles an hour, and wonderful acceleration, and so I bought one of those, a 6.3. And I just loved that, as a sedan. And I drove it until—what happened? Oh. I was a little worried ('cause I was talkin' it up, too), and I was a Rolls dealer (and there is some

competition), and I thought "Well, here am I drivin' a Mercedes, sellin' Rolls, and drivin' a Mercedes." I said, "That isn't right"—to myself, I said that. So I sold it, and people said, "Well, why didn't you like the 6.3?"

And I said, "I love it, but I shouldn't be drivin' a Mercedes." And I did; I went back to Rolls Royces—the sedan. And then we kept one or two in the company, but of course, nothing wrong with that because we had all kinds of cars. But my personal car was a Rolls Royce or a Ferrari. But then, a year or so ago we had a chance to acquire the Mercedes dealership here, which we did, and then I could drive a—maybe that's the reason I bought it! [Chuckles] Now I can drive a Mercedes without hangin' my head. And the 6.3, they quit making, and they got to be a collector's item almost. And everybody—"Oh, gee whiz, why—" and you know—. They went back to 4.5 (that's liters; that's the size of the engine), and the performance is in—you know—proportion to that. And then last year, much to our pleasure, with everything going the other way and governmental controls and speed limits and everything, they came out with a 6.9 Mercedes. And that's even more horsepower and better performance. And of course, I have one of those. So that's my favorite sedan without any doubt. That will go a hundred and forty miles an hour today, and handles just beautifully, and quiet, and just super.

What is it about the speed?

Oh, it's fun to go fast, plus it's fun to beat somebody, plus speed is time, you know? I'll argue with anybody about that. If you can get Point A to Point B in an hour, or you can do it in a half an hour, you've just picked up thirty minutes of your life, without any doubt. And anybody who wants to argue

against that—"Yeah," and blah, blah, a lot of arguments, but there are ways of going a hundred and thirty miles an hour very safely. And I pride myself on that; every car I ever drove had excellent tires and excellent shock absorbers and excellent brakes and a clean windshield and just—. Also I was sittin' there watchin' the road. I wasn't [with] my ear in the radio, or I wasn't lookin' at the ranch over there; I was looking like that [straight ahead]. In fact, when I want to look even today—of course, I don't drive fifty-five, but I don't drive a hundred. But I want to see what things are goin' on in Washoe Valley, I'll let somebody else drive because I cannot drive and look at the scenery to amount to anything. And it's so much fun; I only do it a couple of times a year. And when I do it, I see so many new things, and new houses, and new businesses [chuckles], and—. 'cause if they're not right there, I just—which is good; that's the way you should drive.

Did you ever think about becoming a race driver? Or did you try it?

Oh, I drove up north of town one time. I had a Jaguar; I left that out. I had an XK120. That was my first sports car. I bought that in '48. See, that was a hundred and twenty miles an hour, only they would do a hundred and thirty. That was XK120. XK was the model, and 120 was the top speed. It was a hundred and sixty horsepower, the Jaguar. Came out in 48, and it was unheard-of 'cause they did do a hundred and thirty. That's when a hundred miles an hour was very fast. They took this Jaguar, and they couldn't do it in England, but they took it to the Continent—Belgium or somewhere—on a regular speed run there. And it was a stock Jaguar, and they made a two-way run, and they did a hundred and thirty miles an hour both ways. Jaguars have

always been low priced for what you got, so it was around five thousand dollars. It was a hundred and thirty-mile-an-hour car. And I'd read about it in England. And there was a Jaguar dealer in L.A., and I guess that's when I was on the Horseless Carriage Club. But anyway, in Hollywood, and I was there and I went in, and it was called International Motors, which is the same name we use here. And I forget the owner's name, but I went in to him. And I said, "I want to buy an XK120," and he looked surprised, 'cause I guess not too many people knew about 'em or something.

He said, "Well, yeah, okay." And I paid him, either a big down payment, or I paid him the full price 'cause I wanted it. And that was when it was, say like September or October that all this had come out or was coming out. And I ordered the car, and I expected maybe spring delivery 'cause there were none in the country yet.

So then it was an overnight success and exciting and all the papers and the XK120—wow! And all the stars are ordering them. So I think I made a deposit or something, but—or paid for it—but anyway, I was sure that I'd paid my money, so I couldn't get shut out. I was a little suspicious 'cause I wasn't a celebrity. Then I kept real close track of what ones were coming in the country and International Motors. And I think—and I couldn't prove it—but I think I had a feeling there of uneasiness, like maybe I might get shut out because I'd call, and course, I called twice a week, and well, it was kinda indefinite, and I felt like I was maybe gettin' the runaround. So I went down and really got down to the boss, and you know, polite, but, you know, "When is my car coming in?"

And "Well, we don't know."

I said, "Well, gimme what you have because, as you know, I live in Reno, and it'll mean a special trip. And I want to be here

when it gets here, and I want to take delivery here, and I want a day or two in advance. So please let me know.” And I really kept houndin’ him.

So pretty soon (and maybe it was in my imagination; maybe it was a straight deal all the way) I got a date—okay. And it was a little earlier than I expected, and I thought, “Oh wow, this is neat.” So I went down, and I was there a day ahead of time; and I went snoopin’ around, and by then I knew the guys in the shop and everybody. And they said, “Yes, we have three coming in tomorrow, and one of ’em’s yours.”

I said, “Oh boy, that’s what I wanted to hear.” And I said, “Who are the other two for?”

And he said, “Humphrey Bogart and Gary Cooper.” Huh! [Chuckles.]

And I thought, “Wow, I’m a celebrity!”

So I went down the next day, and they were there—Humphrey Bogart and Gary Cooper, and I. And I think there were pictures and all, although it wasn’t a big thing. But I remember we all took delivery. They didn’t line us up or anything, but just mine’s over here and Gary’s is over there and Humphrey’s is over there. And we weren’t—you know—we were “Hello, how are ya?” and “Gee, we’re lucky to get these cars,” and that’s all we had to say because Gary was interested in his car, and Humphrey was interested—and I’m interested in mine. So we just—”Hello,” “Nice to meet you,” go, you know. That was it, but I still felt like a celebrity, I can remember that. And I even think I drove it home that night. And it would go a hundred and thirty miles an hour, which was—see, that’s in ’48, so that’s before the Chrysler 300s. And the Packards were a hundred and something—a hundred and five or so. So a hundred and thirty was very fast.

But I think that’s why I like speed. Plus it’s—you know, you—superiority. My car’ll

go a hundred and fifty, and yours’ll only go a hundred and forty—you know, it’s that kind of—.

It is kinda technical; I understand it, but I can’t describe it very good.

SOME CAR BUILDERS: MEMORY SKETCHES

How about some of the other people who have been in Reno and involved in cars; did you and Mr. Cord, for example, get to be friendly?

No, I met him a couple of times, that’s all. I think I met him three times. And I communicated with him or the Cord family. We have the special Cord that he had built that we found in Beverly Hills and discovered he’d owned it. Then we asked him, and he told us exactly how it was. And we restored it, and then we showed it to him when we finished and he was Very pleased. I never spent three hours with him or anything—maybe hour or half an hour. Quite a fellow, though.

How about some of the other car builders and designers. Are you close to them or have you been?

Oh, well, I know Mr. [Enzo] Ferrari; I’m friends with him. I can go into that if you like.

I met him (I’m a Ferrari nut)—. First trip to Europe was in ’61. I was on a tour, and we went—we were in Italy, and by maneuvering the schedule a little, I could go to the Ferrari factory. I wasn’t a distributor then; I was a dealer. But I knew somebody that knew him, and I knew the factory and I got them to arrange, and I was—so I had an appointment. And I went to the factory and was shown around and I met Mr. Ferrari. I had my picture taken with him, fortunately, which I have—still have it; it’s on display.

Then I visited the factory about every two to three years. That's '61, so, how many times? And I don't like to bug anybody, so I don't see Mr. Ferrari every time, but I see him maybe every third time, something like that. And I have several pictures of '61 and '66 and '69. In fact, the Ferrari people were here recently, and they said, "Hey, when you comin' back?" And they had kept track, or Mr. Manicardi had.

But I hadn't been there in some time, and I said, "Well, I hate to bug you."

And they said, "No, you're not buggin' us. We feel that you don't like us if you don't show up." And they are arranged for it, where it doesn't stop their production any for me to come in.

I remember the last time I was there, it was very exciting because I got to ride in a new 6.6—what was the model number? Three sixty-five, two plus two. It was a new model—fact the first one I'd seen, and Mr. Ferrari took me for a ride in it, which was thrilling to ride with Mr. Ferrari. I remember he was sixty-nine; the next day was his seventieth birthday. And he drove like a man of twenty-two 'cause he was formerly a race driver, you know, so he really can drive.

And it was kinda fun—I love to tell the story because I had a similar car. This had a 365. See, it's in cc's, and it's times twelve, so that was 4.4 liters, yeah. But the one I had driven was maybe a 350 or something, about 4.2.

But his driving—he drove beautifully, and like we'd go through a little town, and he'd slow down; and then he'd get out in the narrow road and up the hill and around and rrrrr [gesture shifting gears] - I was watching, and he did everything perfect. I was watching very critically. He drove exactly right—not goofy, you know, very fast, but just perfect.

So we started down this slight slope down, and there was a hill ahead I could see.

And he was in third, and he went into fourth tight away. And, so the hill rose about like that [gentle slope], you know. And I had a very similar car. So I would've, if I'd been driving, I would've left it in fourth to pull that hill without—without, what's the word—dragging on the engine.

He was in fourth and he could've gone to fifth, but if it'd been me driving, I would've stayed in fourth because you go into fifth—that's a higher gear, and the engine would've really had to—it wouldn't've been the right gear. The engine'd been turning too slowly and all. So I thought, well, I just would've stayed in fourth. And we got down about to here, and he shifted into fifth, and I thought, "Well, he made a mistake." But then he stepped on it, and as we got to the hill, he just pulled it beautifully. And what I hadn't allowed for was the extra four hundred cc's. In other words, it was the same car except a little bigger engine which had a little more horsepower, a little more torque. So, of course, he was absolutely right. It pulled it in fifth beautifully, and we're a hundred miles an hour, down to ten. What a thrill that was.

And then he took me in where they do their engines. See, they build all the engines, of course, and they run 'em all in. So you can take a Ferrari and drive it wide open the day you get it. And they run 'em in. You walk down a hail, and they have a room, and these engines are all running, rrrrrr. There's a closed door there, but a window that you can look in, and you can go in. So they're maybe running twelve engines then at a time. So he took me down there, which is a treat; everybody doesn't get to go there.

So then he took me into another room which was an air tunnel. An air tunnel—you know, you turn on the air, and you can have a

hundred miles an hour, two hundred miles an hour, whatever. And these car shapes, there's little ribbons on 'em, you know, to tell how the wind resistance is and all. And they had all these futuristic designs, and you can see 1970, '75, '80, '85, you know—oooh!—you're lookin' like that.

And so afterwards I was very thrilled, and just he and I were in there, and he had a big lock on it and all. So then later I saw Mr. Manicardi for lunch or whatever, and that's the American—I mean the English-speaking one—was their kinda PR man. "So how was it?"

And I said, "Oh, wonderful—and the engines and all." And I said, "And that wind tunnel room—"

And he said, "You were in there?"

And I said, "Yes."

And he said, "Did you know the only people that get to go in there are Mr. Ferrari and the chief engineer?" He said, "I've been with the company for twenty-something—" he said, "I've never been in there!" [Laughing] So I was very thrilled that he took me through there. And for some reason he likes me, or he likes us—I don't know—but that's wonderful.

Then another man I met that had his name on a car is Mr. Bentley, who designed the Bentley car, which later went in with the Rolls Royce. But I visited him in England a few years ago. I have a picture of that day, too, which was one of the biggest days in my life. A mutual friend, a car collector, made the appointment for me and drove me out; he lived outside of London, Mr. Bentley and his wife—W. O. were his initials; everybody calls him W. O., or did. He was about seventy-five when I met him—very clear—his mind was clear. So we spent the whole day, had lunch and then just sat and talked. I asked him many questions about the car and the engine—they have a very unusual camshaft, a setup. And it's

a wonderful thing. And it's the only car that uses it, and it's absolutely quiet and actually it's a wonderful design.

I knew he'd been a railroad man, but I'd forgotten—I made no connection between the two. And he'd been a railroad man, and then he'd gotten into cars. So I said, "Mr. Bentley, how did you ever figure out that camshaft drive?"

And he said, "Well, you know, I was a railroad engineer."

And I said, "Yes," and then he just looked at me and grinned. And as you know, the engine, a locomotive, the steam, and there's a rod comes out, and it's hooked onto the wheel and it turns, you know, and it drives like that [gesture wheel turning]. And that's exactly how he drove his camshaft.

And he said, "I was a railroad engineer." And then it hit me, and it is, it is an exact copy.

But he told me, he started on a shoestring and built these Bentley cars—they were super sports cars—and he won a lot of races, but he was always behind—never enough money. And they were a very desirable car, and they won a lot of races. Then it just got tougher and tougher, but they kept going, kept going, kept going till the '30s, early '30s and Depression and all, and then he just had to give up and sold out to Rolls Royce. He was—paid his bills and could walk away. He had some money; he wasn't a wealthy man. And then he thought—and I kinda agree with him—that he thought Rolls would continue the Bentley, 'cause it was a sports car. But all Rolls did, they really junked the Bentley. Today you can buy a Bentley, but it's just a Rolls with a Bentley radiator and Bentley hubcaps. So he was very disappointed at that, which he told me; he said, "I didn't know that was gonna happen, but," he said, "it did," and he was out the door, then. They were kinda cold to him 'cause he didn't have much money, and they just kinda

dusted him off, which—for what that's worth. And I respect the Rolls company, but I think their relationship with Bentley was—.

But anyway, I spent the day, had lunch with him and his wife. She was a real sharp lady. They'd been married for forty, fifty years. And they weren't doin' too good, you could see; they had this little apartment and a little tiny car. They weren't hungry or anything, but they didn't have much. And he was very interested in the Collection. And I told him about it. I had one of these books, and it was— told him. "Oh gee. Gee, I'd love to see that one."

I said, "Well, can you come over?"

"No, no, no, we can't—we don't have any money, you know." so I thought, Maybe I should invite them." And then I thought, "No, I just met 'em today; it might be a little too—" on, what's the word?—loud American. So I thanked—"Good-bye"— and then I wrote a very nice thank-you letter later and really worked hard on it. "Thank you—one of the biggest days in my life. I've thought about it a lot, and would like to extend to you and Mrs. Bentley an invitation to visit the United States and especially the Collection, but also, as long as you're here, (this is at my expense), and Washington or New York," whatever else they wanted to see in two or three weeks— whatever they like.

And so I didn't hear. I thought, "Oooh, I wonder if I offended 'em?"

And then finally I did hear, and it was a real nice letter. And I think she wrote it and wrote kinda "we." And he dictated it—"And we've talked—it was thrilling, your invitation. We've talked about it and we've thought about it. What could be more wonderful," and, "ultimate of our lives," and all. He said, "We've given it very serious consideration, and we're sorry to say we have to turn it down." And the reason was— and it was explained

real good—that his health really wasn't too good, and he could probably make it, but there would be problems traveling, and he couldn't walk too good, and his heart, and his blood pressure, and on and on, and it was just inadvisable at his age in his state of health to make the trip. Then he died two or three years afterwards—or four years—but I've often wondered, well—I mean was it the right decision? I'm sure it was, but still it would've been so nice for him to—. And I did have an excellent collection of Bentleys for him to see, plus the other cars.

I think those are the only two I've ever met, I believe. I think there's one more. I can't remember.

OBSERVATIONS ON MODERN AUTO MANUFACTURING

Suppose we talk for a little while about the industry itself—about how you see the evolution of the automobile industry.

Ooh, that's a big subject. Okay. Well, the reason the company is in existence—we're talkin' about American companies—the reason they are in existence—there's only four now—General Motors and Ford, Chrysler, and American Motors. And they're the survivors. It's a terrible competitive and dog-eat-dog business. But General Motors is the biggest and the most successful and primarily because they're just such good operators. And then every facet of it just—they have good design, good planning, good marketing, good quality; they don't miss a bet that I can see.

And Ford, it's Number Two, and they do an excellent job but not as good as General Motors 'cause Ford doesn't cover the field like General Motors does; they don't have a car for every notch, which General Motors started that in the '20s. And surprisingly to

me, nobody's ever really successfully done that. And so Ford doesn't do it, although the cars that Ford makes are good cars. They're modern, well designed.

And Chrysler is very similar to Ford in that respect. They don't cover the market fully. And Chrysler, for all the years they've been in business, they're not too good operators in that they seem to be running behind all the time, and so many things that they should do themselves, they have done. General Motors will send out a lot of work, which can be done better and cheaper on the outside. But Chrysler and to a lesser extent, Ford, will buy from suppliers or send out work that they could do themselves. And because of that, it's kind of the easy way to do it. But that's why General Motors can put out their Chevrolet for less cost than the Plymouth or the Ford—the comparable model—because they make so many more things themselves. And then Chrysler is very weak in that respect. They buy an awful lot of things that they should make.

And American Motors has been a tiny little company for years and never was a big company, and I have the whole history of it, of course. It was Jeffrey, and then it was Nash, and then it was So-and-so and So-and-so. It almost died four or five times, as you probably remember, everyone does— and they were really on their deathbed, and George Romney got in there and made small cars. If they'd stayed with his principles, they'd be in better shape today because he said, "Build a small car and don't get involved in the specialty cars and don't get involved in the big cars. Get your little niche, a little different small car, a quality small car, and stay right there." He could turn the company around—and left the company, which, of course, was his privilege.

Then the various managements since then have gone in this direction and gone in that direction and gone in the other direction.

It isn't dead yet because they also own Jeep, which is the vehicle which I'm prejudiced towards, I guess 'cause I sell 'em. But it's almost a one-of-a-kind car; there's no direct competition with Jeep. So it makes a lot of money; it keeps American Motors afloat. Then they have another division (I forget the name of it) that built the buses and all, on contract and bids, and that division makes money. But the actual American Motors loses money, and primarily because of their—well, they got into big cars, and then they let their styling get behind, and—. I wouldn't write 'em off yet. It's a management thing, and their designer, Dick Teague, is a real good friend of mine, who also is an antique car fella. He's an excellent designer. But it's a management—it comes down to management. But I still think American Motors could survive if they do the right things.

I have a story to tell about Dick Teague. I've know him since he lived in Los Angeles twenty years ago or longer, and I met him as an antique car fella. And he only has one eye, which impresses me because he is a designer and beautiful—which, of course, one eye is all you need. He was always just the flunky kind, and he worked for—I think he started with General Motors, and then he went to Packard, and I used to kid him because he went with I think about four losers in a row, I think the last one was Packard. And I asked him, "What company are you goin' with next?" He said he didn't know, and I said, "Well, maybe if you give 'em your record, they'll pay you to stay away!"

But he tells one story that I love. He built a car for American Motors, and it was—and I can't remember the name of it. It was a good-lookin' car. And previously—'fact, when he designed it, when it came out, it was such a good-lookin' car that I borrowed one from a local dealer. It was a (the name'll come to me).

And I had my picture taken with it and sent it to Dick. And I said, "Dear Dick—" Then I signed it, "Gee, Dick you finally got one." And I said, "Gee, that's wonderful." He'd previously designed the Marlin.

That was supposed to be a sporty car, and it was a two-door; it was a Nash. And the front end looked pretty good, and then the rear end, it just looked terrible. So then one day I was at a car meet or something with Dick Teague, and I said, "Gee, Dick, that car you designed was so beautiful." I said, "Wow! How did you do that?"—you know.

And he said, "Well, I'll tell ya." He said, "This is the car business." He said, "I can design good-lookin' cars, there's no question." And he said, "But I design it; then it goes into the committee, and they change this and they change that, and it depends on who's strongest in the committee what comes out of there." And he said, "Well, let me get to the Marlin first—" and he said, "I designed—" and he sketched it like this [gestures], and it was a beautiful thing. He said, "It was like that. Like here's the front of the car, and then it's like that, and a real fastback, like that, see." Real woo! Said, "That was the car I submitted to the committee." And they said, "Oh, it looks good. Fine." So they built a mock-up, and that's a full-sized model.

So he said the chairman of the board was great big guy, and Dick was away on vacation or somethin' anyway, which wouldn't have made any difference. But the big guy—they went in; he looked at the mock—"Oh, that's beautiful." But he says, "I don't like any car that I can't ride in the back seat without my hat on." So he got in the back seat with his hat on, and of course, to accommodate him, they had to raise this. So instead of that pretty line there, it came like this [drawing]. And then, of course, they only had this far to go; they had to come way back in fast, so it just had

an awful-lookin' rear end. I'll show you one if you want to—when you're at the Collection sometime. It's horrible. He said, "Because of that, that's the way the car came out, and the car was a flop."

He went on and told about the new one he'd done. And he said, "Well, this," he said, "I designed it exactly the way I wanted to." And he said, "I submitted it to the committee." And he said, "They were gonna act on it, and they had a political problem." So I don't know—maybe they all got fired or something. And fact, nobody was runnin' the company for a little while, and the politics are goin' on; so he said, "Before the new group could come in, they were so far behind on their production line, they said, 'Give us that damn design, Dick. We gotta get this line goin'.'" "

So he sent the design down 'cause there was nobody to approve it, so there was nobody to change it. So it went through [laughing] untouched! But he said, "That was the only reason 'cause nobody was runnin' the company." He said, "If there'd been somebody there, they'd've changed somethin' just to be changin' somethin'."

I learn from these things, too, and of course, I get in. But things are submitted, like our advertising, many times. And I'll want to say this, and I'll speak up if I—but I'm a lot more cautious than I used to be because I'll think, "Well, gee, I don't like that. But now wait a minute. That does that mean—I mean the general public. Will they not like that? Or is it just me my own personal thing, gettin' in the way?" And I think I've learned somethin' there.

'course, on the other hand, you can prove anything just about either way. You can prove both sides of a subject. General Motors is about the strongest committee company there is in the world. There're committees on committees, but still they get so much done

and so much good done. They just have a philosophy that seems to really work.

And funny, over the years, I know I've bought very few General Motors cars for personal use. And I guess maybe it's, I like something a little different, a little faster, a little hotter, a little more rakish, a little more something, and they were always kind of middle of the road, and I never really want to be in the middle of the road. Each car in each class is an excellent car and usually ahead of the competition. And you can't knock success. And they have committees, but—. It's quite a company, General Motors.

Maybe it's true that there really is a mass market out there.

Oh, yeah, that's no problem; that never has since the Model T Ford, that people would rather have a Ferrari or a Bugatti because it's a little different. But still they will— if they can afford it and they like the car, they don't care if there's a million other of the identical car goin' down the street. If that bugged people, you wouldn't see all the Chevies you see, or the Fords, or the Jeeps. 'course, the multicolors and all helps that a lot.

You were going to talk about Chrysler engineering. Is that really the engineering company?

Well, it was. Years ago, it started that way. Walter P. Chrysler Was a great engineer, and he handed it down. Over the years Chrysler engines have always been good. In the last twenty years they were first with a hemi engine, which was really revolutionary, and which they abandoned because of cost, which many of we car freaks have despaired about.

They also had a front end torsion bar system that was super. It came out in the '50s, and was so far ahead of everybody—General

Motors and Ford—that a Chrysler would corner so much better. Of course, they've caught up now, and the other companies have caught up on engines and suspensions. I don't think Chrysler engineering is superior to anybody any more. They're not the healthiest company there is.

They have more bad years, and their costs run higher when things are good; they don't make as much money as the others. And when things are bad, they lose more, their factories are behind. They're not nearly as good as Ford and General Motors. Arid they'll be the next company to go if there is another one— I mean after American Motors.

Of course, the unions have just murdered the car companies. That's the biggest problem they have is their expense, plus their shoddy workmanship. I would hate to be in that business, like to put out a Cadillac, which is a quality car. They use their best workmen there, and still they do lousy work. That costs money to do it over and over—terrible.

Is that really traceable to the unions, or is it something else?

Hm, I blame the unions, for the car companies—they don't want to build bad cars; they want to build good cars. But many of their employees they can't fire, and they do shoddy work and make—and just—it's lousy. And many of 'em—not all of 'em—but many of 'em just don't give a damn, just the hell with it. Maybe I shouldn't say unions, but management doesn't say, "Hey, you guys, we want you to build a bum car today." I'm sure of that.

And there's bum cars comin' out that door at a tremendous expense—tremendous labor expense—when the unions should be tellin' their fellas, "We're gettin' you this much money; now put out a day's work for it." And

then everybody'd be happy. But when they don't care how good a job they do as long as they pay their dues, why, it's a sad situation.

That's why the Japanese have made such tremendous inroads, because of the quality of their products. The engineering is good, but it's no better than American. But the quality is excellent—just excellent. And that's the Japanese workman—takes pride in his work.

And the Germans, too. All of which I sell—Mercedes and BMW and Volkswagen are all quality, excellent workmanship.

Italian workmanship is pretty good, but they have a lot of union problems there. These one-day strikes are their big thing over there. When the car comes out the door, it's a pretty good car—better than American, I'll say that.

You think of the assembly line as having been really the answer to a lot of these mass production problems and the way it was developed here.

Well, it was real good for a while till the unions—like Ford or Henry Ford, Sr., he had a lot of faults, but he did pioneer the five-dollar day when I think wages were two-forty or somethin', and, he raised everybody to five dollars. And they had to work for it, but still it was double wages. And there's no way you could've got a union in the plants then.

But also, something that'll be real interesting to observe—you know, Volkswagen is gonna open a plant in Pennsylvania this year; to save the costs is the only reason for it. They figure they can build a Volkswagen in this country cheaper and sell it cheaper than they can build one in Germany and bring it over and sell it because the wages have gone up there very high.

And okay—the next logical question—”All right, you have excellent quality in Germany; what are you going to do about

quality here?” And they've planned for it, and I think they've negotiated a contract, where they will have more authority in firing than the other car companies. I think the other car companies have been rather negligent there in not gettin' the power to tire. And I think because Volkswagen was wanted and because of the—Pennsylvania wanted 'em and all, that there was a lot of political push—yes. So they insisted on this; it's really a special contract with the union, that they do have a better quality, and it's easier for them to fire somebody or have 'em fired. Plus, I think they're gonna use two or three or four inspectors to one of the other companies. It'll be interesting, really interesting, to see if they can get the quality. And if they can, why then the other car companies, there's no reason they shouldn't do it, too. And they could negotiate, if they wanted to, a similar contract for competitive reasons, 'cause the Pinto competes against the Volkswagen. So then it might be a real good thing for everybody.

And those workmen, they're human beings, and if you could just turn 'em around. Of course, a slob's a slob, but there's some people—if it made 'em happy to go home with a—'cause I know I would, if I was a workman; I feel wonderful if I've done a good day's work. What little side windows I put in were all put in right, I'd feel better than if I'd put 'em in sloppy. I don't know. Maybe there's a way of gettin' that message across. Hope so, for the good of the country.

Is it, then, that the real pleasure you get from the Collection is the beauty of the cars?

Well, the beauty and the engineering, you know? I mean you can appreciate engineering without touchin' 'em, you know, like the newest Ferrari or the newest Mercedes or something—I love the engineering, and

I can describe it to you, but no way—and they’re so complicated today, no way could I do anything but—. No, I love the design and the—good design and the bum design, where American cars, many of ’em do have a poor design compared to—I was gonna say European cars, but I’d say other cars. Not only Japanese cars are very well designed (most of them), most European cars—. There are some good American cars, but there’re so many corners they missed that they could do just—. Absolutely ridiculous! General Motors should be ashamed of themselves. And they’re out to make a dollar, which they do very well, but for just a little more effort and no cost, they could build a better car.

What would you build if you were building the car? Say, you’re going to build the “Harrah”.)

Well, no, I don’t want to do that, ’cause it would be like a Ferrari, or like a Mercedes; only they do it better than I could do it, so I don’t want to tangle with them.

Just to fantasize for a moment, and say, you were going to build the “Harrah.”

Well, it would be depending on—if it was a sports car, I mean two-passenger and the high performance it would be like a Ferrari, the twelve-cylinder Ferrari. It would be about identical. I don’t know a thing I’d change. And then in a touring car, a five-passenger car, it would be the Mercedes 6.9, which is—nothing there that I’d change. I put some mirrors on it, and I think that’s the only thing I did to that car, ’cause it has a tachometer, it has all the goodies; it’ll go a hundred and forty miles an hour, so it’s a—. No, I would never—. Even years ago, I—people want to put their name on a car, and I wouldn’t put my name

on it unless it was superior, and it just—. It’s a big thing makin’ a good automobile. A lot of people try it, and they fail every time, so it may be a pretty car, but it’s no good compared to what you can buy, so it’s a profession, a big one for many years.

You have these dealerships for American cars, too—the Jeep and the American Motors. Do you try to give them some advice?

Oh, yes.

How do they react?

Well, just on Jeep—the other cars, we don’t. We sell them and—. But on Jeep, which is a big thing with us, and our men, they have dealer meetings and factory meetings, and they ask; you don’t have to volunteer, they ask, “What would you like?” And then we make—and they’re usually the same suggestions—this, that, and the other thing, but generally, they’re about what we want. Few little things that they know about, like it’s time for a new body on the Wagoneer. That one came out in ’63. This is ’78—that’s fifteen years. And it’s pretty, but it should be modernized. They were going to do it ’79 or ’80, and then they keep moving it back, and they don’t have as much money as the other companies; and plus the fact that Wagoneers have taken off, and lately they keep increasing production and increasing, so why change it when they’re sellin’ all they can build? But we make suggestions. We make suggestions to Ferrari, too, but more merchandising than design. They do a super job of design.

As kind of a related thing while you’re just thinking about the car industry in general,

would you like to discuss your participation in the freeway planning through this area?

Oh, yeah, well, our position right from the start was we wanted the freeway, number one; and then number two, we wanted it as close as feasible to downtown Reno. It was that simple. And it couldn't be south or north or wherever, you know. Walter Baring got out—I think somebody paid him. I think, without any question, that nobody goes that far out on a thing. And it got to be a political football. But I'm happy where it is, but it could've gone a lot of places, but I sure didn't want it ten miles north or ten miles south or right down here. SO I think it's fine where it is; it's okay. Maybe it's too close to the University, I don't know.

I just wondered if you got involved in the discussion, if some of your people got involved.

Oh yeah, well, we played it the way we thought.

Would you like to describe that a little bit?

Oh, I did, more or less—we were just on the edge. In the casino business, you don't get out in front. You know, that's dumb 'cause you feel like you maybe have too many people, you know, and probably rightly so—say, you're tryin' to run the town and makin' a lot of money and all. So it's good to take a position; I think it's bad to say, "No comment" on somethin' like that. And we did, but we sure didn't want to be out in front where we could get our chin hit. But I think our position was no secret all along. But still Walter Baring—and I didn't agree with him at all—but still he was our congressman, and I'm not gonna say, "Walter Baring you're a dirty so and so," you

know. But I stated our whole thing, and that was our position all along.

Did you communicate with Mr. Baring on it or anything?

Well, I don't—see, I'm always on the edge of that sort of thing. But I knew what we were doing, but I didn't talk to Walter; I didn't talk to any of 'em. Walter and I were real good friends. Fact, I gave him a job one time when he had been defeated; he had that one term and he was between. And he had a terrible time, you know. I think he had a child that was handicapped, and he was just—.

This is a funny story—well, funny, pitiful story. But that time we had maybe two or three or four hundred employees, and I talked to the manager—Bob Ring or whoever it was—and said, "Find somethin' for Walter to do. He just is out of a job and he's (you know)—doesn't have any money."

And they looked and they looked and they talked to him and they looked and they looked, and they come back and they said, "There's nothin' in the company [laughing] that Walter could do!"

I think I got him his job, and—what was his business?

He was in the furniture business for a while.

Yeah. In furniture, and then I got him a job at Hermann Wilson. See, [Dudley] Wilson was a real good friend of mine; I was buyin' Chryslers, plus, Wilson liked me. I knew more about cars than he did, and he loved to talk car—he'd ask questions, you know—"Why do you like that car?" And I'd tell him. We were friends. He'd always get me the latest Chrysler sooner than he should've and all that; he was a good guy. I went to him, and I said, "Do me a favor."

And he said, "I sure will." He was that kind of a guy.

And so, here Walter wasn't the smartest guy in the world, but a lot of people know him and like him, you know. And he was there for I think maybe till he got reelected and was a—one of the best jobs he had.

So Walter and I were friends till he died; you know, you couldn't help just liking him.

And I remember I stopped in Lovelock or Winnemucca one time and, you know how Walter got around the state, how he was unbeatable 'cause he electioneered so great. And I went in this bar, and I wanted to have a—well, I didn't drink when I was drivin' much, so I went in the restaurant. Yeah, it was— what's his name that lost his license over there in Lovelock?

Felix. I went in Felix's to have a sandwich, and Walter was there. And this was when he was big and, you know. And he was smilin' and talkin' and—"Bill! How are ya?" And he come over, and I'd seen him a week before or somethin'—but, shook hands and—"Sit down, Bill. How are ya?" You know, "You give me all the—."

I said, "Walter, you don't have to do that with me. You know, I'm with you, you know." And he just kept right on goin', just went right through [laughing].

I remember I told my wife or whoever I was with—I said, "Well, I'm sorry I took forty minutes, but [laughing], that's Walter Baring!"

But he did, and he was never in a hurry, and he visited, and someone else'd come in, and he'd go right through the whole thing with them. And I think he genuinely liked people, as you can't do that without goin' crazy, unless you do like—.

But ol' Walter—he was all right. But he's better 'n some of those jerks back there—a lot of them. But in the freeway, he was payin'

off a debt there, I guess. It was too bad it took so long; it was dumb, but those things happen.

But it's sure nice it's there; I use it quite a bit, especially when my ex-wife—see, she lived out on [Mayberry].

She lived out there, and I go see the boys all the time. And I'd be at HAC, and to get from there to Mayberry—and maybe I'm goin' over at five o'clock at night, you know, 'cause the boys are out of school and they're home by then. And I did many hundreds—well, countless times. And I would leave HAC and go down onto McCarran, come down and get on the freeway, "zzzzz" up here to the second one after here (I think it is), and then just down, and Mayberry, and right on out—wonderful.

Having decent roads really means a lot to your business, in general. I just thought you might like to discuss that.

Well, within the last several years I've driven to San Francisco at least once. I try to do it every couple of years, and it's such a pleasure now. I remember last time I went with Verna, and we'd never driven it before. Talkin' about Sacramento, I said, "We'll be there pretty soon." And then I [turns head]—there it was! [Laughing] You know, we just—! 'cause I remember for years there, the freeway would go right up, and then there would be a mile or two of city streets, and then more freeway. And then, of course, they connected it up, and you just went sailing through. It's just wonderful.

I enjoy that drive. I try to do it once a year now— San Francisco to Reno or vice versa. It's amazing, you know; years ago it took much longer than it does today—you know the goofy speed limits they got.

“GOOFY OVER CARS”

Will you summarize your feelings about your “love affair” with automobiles?

Well, I like all cars, and I like new cars as well as old ones. I keep up on what's new in the automotive world, I think. I read—like my wife says, all I ever read is automobile magazines; that isn't really true, but it's pretty true [chuckling]. We take about everything there is out at HAC, and they all come to my office. And some I'll automatically send back, and then some that—maybe one I'll automatically send back, but there's an intriguing—I always look at the cover and see what's in it; maybe I'll take it. And I take fifteen or twenty home in a crack, and I read—or I glance at two or three a night, usually. And some are more interesting than others. And so, “Oh, boy, there's a So-and-so!” And I do that, so I do keep up very well on modern stuff.

And it's nice now; years ago there were no automobile publications that amounted to anything. Motor Trend came out and Road and Track. I mean there were none in united States, where they've always had them in England. In fact, I used to buy automobile magazines always from England, and then just the last fifteen or twenty years from the united States. But as I said, I keep up on 'em, and then the newest car I'm interested in. And some cars I'm—makes of cars I prefer.

We have the many dealerships in Reno, which just came about by love of cars. I got the Rolls Royce dealership because I was buyin' Rolls Royces. And I had no thought of being a dealer, but I was having difficulty—the distributor in San Francisco was a little (I still think he's a little stodgy or whatever the word was) —he was a little difficult to deal

with. Who knows, the ego thing or what—but I think I'm right on that. We were buying many Rolls Royces for the company 'cause I like them as a prestige—I wasn't a Rolls Royce guy, but my wife of the time had a Rolls. And we were buying limousines, and it was rather difficult. And then somehow it hit me, or I figured out, or it became apparent that if I was a dealer, it would be very helpful; I could go to the factory, I could do this and that. And I would still have to work through him, but it gave me a lot more. And it was offered, and so I accepted.

It was just a two-way thing to get Rolls Royces faster and cheaper and a better—which I did—I went to the factory, which you cannot go to the factory unless you are a dealer. But I had no thought of selling Rolls Royces in Reno—I mean that's ridiculous. But we opened up; we put out a sign, “Rolls Royces,” and we've always sold, oh, six to twelve a year— (now, of course, it's more). And then well, that includes many of em to our stars, like—I can't think of a star, a big star, that hasn't bought one or more Rolls Royces from us. And, well, of course, we give 'em a good deal. Like Sammy Davis must've bought ten over the years, and Frank Sinatra, two or three. Our top stars like, oh, Neil Sedaka. I think Bill Cosby's about the only one—he's a Mercedes fella. We've gotten him, of course, now that we have Mercedes, but for years I got him Mercedes—just got 'em, you know, went out of my way to find one and get it for him at a good price.

But then the Rolls came along, and then Ferrari, which again that was it—I was a Ferrari guy. There was a lady distributor that was—didn't like—well, I got the agency. I was havin' trouble getting Ferraris. So I had a chance to buy the agency, the Reno area. And then I couldn't get cars because of this

lady—didn't like my manager and so on; it was a big hassle. And finally I got that straightened out.

And then for no reason—I don't know yet, 'cause I was real happy to have the agency, and then Ferrari—and I mean the company and the man—and I forget how it came about—if it was orally or a letter or what. They said, "Would you like to be west coast distributor?"—which is generally west of the Mississippi. I think we have twenty-some states distributed on, and we have the dealers.

And I said, "Gee whiz, yes! Wow! Sure!" And so the paperwork started, and I kept thinkin', "One of these days, I'm gonna get a bill or a—say, 'Well, now that's gonna cost you so much.'" And it never happened.

And they've been—'course, we've gone out of our way to be a good distributor, you know. And there are things about being a good distributor, in other words, like you want to be good with the factory. Ferrari, which they like to get their money when the—and then even when our credit is good. They want their money when the car goes on the ship over in— it's either Italy, or they ship out of Germany (Hamburg). And that's, you know, thirty days before we get the cars; and of course, the accountants and even my lawyer say, "Well, gee, that's not fair!" Well, that's not the point; Ferrari wants it that way, and boy, they're the guys that sell you the cars. And they're doing you a big favor: they're sellin' you the car at five to ten thousand dollars less than you can sell it for, why, you should be real nice to them, so I do it exactly the way they want. So we're a good distributorship; they like us very much, which I'm proud of, because we work that.

And then also you gotta be super fair. Like we buy them at a very big discount. And then we sell 'em to our dealers at wholesale. But there's a big markup in between there.

And there is a temptation—people come to Reno to buy a Ferrari. We have a retail agency here, and we have to be very careful to keep the retail and the wholesale separate. And we could sell ten Ferraris a day out of our (well, that's exaggerating a little but not too much)—out of our retail store here. But in doing that, a man comes from San Mateo and buys a Ferrari here, we have a dealer in that area. Well, that's his prospect, not ours. So we'll say, "Hey," you know, "go back and make your deal with him. And if you want to come up here, you can take delivery of the car here—that's fine. But you buy it from your—" (you know).

So we protect our dealers. They come at you from every direction—just how to not do that. And we do not violate the manager who's—Kyle's his name; that's his last name, but we call him Kyle [Vein Kyle]. And he just is so strong on that, and it's been so good for our reputation that we have an excellent reputation—like we can tell a dealer, "I'm sorry, we've only got so many cars; your allotment is three—" Well, they know that's all we can give 'em, that's it. We're not slippin' this guy six or somethin' because you know, they've been around long enough to know we just deal—here we got sixty cars, and four to you, and four to him, and six to him because he's bigger, and you know.

But anyway, that's been real profitable. That's the basis for all the other dealerships. Jeep came along just because it was for sale at a real good price, and the owner had lost interest. And it was one of those opportunities that you don't believe would ever happen; you don't even think about it, and then it comes along. I've been lucky in my life having many of those. And something I do say, which a lot of people do—but a lot of people don't—and is when an opportunity comes along and it's a good one, grab it! And so many people [say], "Gee, I don't really have the money," or, "I

don't really—" you know, and they'll argue against themselves all the reasons for not doin' it, and miss it. And many times I've said yes to things where I didn't have the money. But I thought, "By God, I'm sure I can get it somewhere." Somebody—"Do you want so and so for such and such?"

I say, "Yeah!" [Hits desk] "Let's sign the papers!" In the meantime, I'm runnin' around the back door of the bank, sayin', "Hey! Need a little money here!" Boy, when opportunity knocks, you better open the door. That's so important.

Of course, most of those deals were prethought, where it didn't take a big decision on my part. It was just something I'd love to have, like the Jeep thing. I knew what it was worth, I'd love to have it—but how? You know. How am I ever gonna get it? The guy's had it for fifteen years, and he's makin' a lot of money; it's not for sale.

Same thing happened with Mercedes here, which is a car I love. That was untouchable. I thought, "Gee, I (you know)— I missed that by twenty years." And then I had a new manager, who I'll give him credit—that's Harvey Ewing. He's the general manager of all the agencies, which we needed when we got more than one, and he's an excellent man; he's from the east coast, and he does a tine job. And we were talkin' Mercedes, and we were talkin' about openin' one at Tahoe if we could, and this and that, because its such a wonderful car and there's such a demand for it.

And one day he said, "Well, why don't we go ask Bill Sullivan," who was the Mercedes dealer, "if he wants to sell it." And I hadn't even thought of it.

And I said, "Well, all right. But (you know) why would he sell it, it's such a wonderful thing."

And we went in and he was in the mood to sell, and gee, just a couple of weeks we'd made a deal on it, which was just unbelievable. A

good Mercedes agency's as good as anything you can have because they're such super cars, and there's a big profit in each one. And you can sell all you can get; you know, you're livin'.

Are these car agencies part of the Harrah's Corporation, or all separate?

No, that's separate. Well, you know, there's a good reason for that: one, is I'm a car person; and two, Harrah's— it's not their business. They're in the casino and recreation, hotel, that—and so they shouldn't be in the car business.

So you own the car agencies.

Yes, that's strictly separate. And all the stuff in Idaho, I own separate.

See, we have Jeep and American Motors; that's one place. And Modern Classic Motors—that's where we have Ferrari and also the offices for the wholesale. And that's where they come in—Ferrari. And we have Rolls Royce, and we have Aston Martin, Fiat, and BMW, which is a real good item. That's an excellent car. And that Mercedes—we have Mercedes and Datsun. Mercedes is the prestige—as good a car as there is, including Rolls Royce. And then we have Datsun for volume, and we sell, ooh, like last month we sold a hundred and fifty Datsuns. [Chuckles] That amazing? Uh-huh.

And then in Idaho—in Ketchum, Idaho—I have the Jeep agency and I have Volkswagen and Audi and Porsche, which is kinda nice because it's a little different line. And Jeep is wonderful for that country. And then the other was there. And it's nice to—you know—like somebody wants a Volkswagen, a friend, why—. A new Volkswagen diesel is quite a car. A few friends of mine have wanted them, and I've been able to get 'em for em.

That's a very small volume up there, but it's also nice and—I'm in Sun Valley, which I'm there a lot, and I get up and have breakfast, so I like a place to go, and I can go down to the agency, say, "How's business?" and "The garage floor is dirty," and, you know, a few things. It's really a fun thing with me.

We took it over and had a little tiny shop, and we made the shop about six times bigger. In fact, it's the best shop in that area—Sun Valley and Ketchum and Hailey. And so we get a lot of work from every kind of car there 'cause most of the dealers up there just have a little, you know, seat-of-the-pants garage in the back. And ours is good. So we do real good in the shop, even though we don't sell too many cars. It's a fun thing; it really is fun.

You must be stretching out to be becoming one of the largest foreign car dealers in the country, then, aren't you?

Oh, I don't know. There's some real big ones—you know, in big cities. But in numbers, it's just—we're not lookin' for anything; it's just a good one. A lot of cars I wouldn't want to have; most American cars, I just don't have any interest for 'em. Not that they're not all right; for the money they're excellent. But just they're not my kind of car. And I have no desire to be a Pontiac dealer ever! Pontiac's okay; Oldsmobile's okay, you know. And the only American cars outside of Jeep, I would consider Cadillac in the right place.

You have the American Motors dealership, though.

Well, that comes from Jeeps. That's an automatic thing, which doesn't hurt anything, and also it makes the factory like you better—you're sellin' them, too [chuckles]. It's important! [Chuckling]

But those are fun. I'm goofy over cars—old cars, new cars, all kinds of cars.

And it's interesting, too, over the years how you change, you know. You change; you're not the person you were twenty years ago at all. And I'm not either, of course. And like with cars, I can remember many cars we have in the museum and when I was a kid, like a '24 Essex coach, I thought was one of the "awfulest" cars ever made. And the reason was it had been a real good four-cylinder car, and they came out with a kind of a bum six cylinder. And the lines got worse—it was real boxy; it was real square—and they were very popular 'cause it was a very low price. And I can remember workin' in the parking lot, how I hated those Essex coaches! I just thought that's the worst car anybody could ever think—. And today I think they're real cute, you know. And we have one in the museum, you know. "Look at that—[points]." It's a cute little car, which is—many cars like that.

And other cars, you know, as a kid, I thought were so super; well, now I know that they really weren't, but I was lookin' at 'em through the eyes of a fifteen-year-old kid, and now I'm lookin' at 'em from an older kid. I'm more interested in other things, maybe. I generally like all cars; there's very few cars I don't like.

Which ones are they, the ones you really don't like?

Oh, in antique cars hardly any, except—. I don't have any names offhand, but there were just some cars that just didn't make any sense right from the start. And they went out of business; just they were—compared to a competitor, maybe they weren't as good lookin', didn't have as much horsepower, and didn't handle as good and cost two hundred dollars more—you know, just, what's their

excuse for bein'? You wonder why they even went into it. And of course, they failed. Any of those cars, they're just a—I call 'em a nothin' car." And we have a few in the museum; and we call it that, you know. What's that—'cause that's a nothin' car. Look, here's 1927—look at that and (you know). Ninety horsepower, so much, da da da da da da da da. And this is a sixty-four horsepower and—you know, not too good lookin'. No wonder they didn't even last till the crash; they went out in '27, you know. They're not only car things; they're example of life and business and how to do things, how not to do things.

And like Henry Ford was such a tremendous success, he got production down, and he watched cost, so he got the price of his product down. And he was sellin', you know, up to a million a year, and one time he had eighty percent or ninety percent of the American market. And he's sellin' all he could, and sellin' the Ford for three hundred and fifty dollars, and he would cut it to three and a quarter, which doesn't make sense, but still, then he sold another two hundred thousand. That extra twenty-five or fifty dollars made that difference, which made it all up to him, and a profit, plus. So a lot of good economic ideas in that. Put out a good product, which Ford knew, at the lowest possible market price, you know, where you can make a fair profit, and that's the way to go.

And we watch that today in business, you know. Like I'm not as active as I was, but you know, I keep track. Like any pricing of our restaurants, that all has to go through me, you know. And of course, our costs go up all the time, and everything is more and more, and wages are more and more, and they'll come through and recommend an increase in our menu prices. And boy, I really look at every one. And just, you know, why charge a dollar seventy-five if you can sell it for a dollar sixty

and have a fair profit. And then you want to watch that; you know, you think the fifteen cents doesn't matter—it does matter. And somebody comes in and, you know—and it's a dollar sixty here and it's a dollar seventy-five at the Mapes; well, gee whiz, why go to the Napes? Let's go to Harrah's. Well, they walk by, and maybe puts a quarter in the machine, plus a good word for us. So, that's the way you do things. Always keep your prices down. But you gotta protect yourself.

What about some of the modern cars, then, that you really don't like?

[Chuckles] Oh, let me think. Well, they all have their good points. Buick's never been a big favorite of mine. And I don't know why, just maybe because it was "America's car" or middle-class America or something. And there are some real outstanding Buicks, like the '42 Buick Century was one of the outstanding cars ever—a real hot performer. And in '42, Packard and Buick were the cars, and I was a Packard guy, but if I hadn't got a Packard, I'd've got a Buick. Like today Buick just is a car—so what? Except they did come about with a turbo charger, which is kinda revolutionary for Buick. And Buick does get the short shrift of many things, like in General Motors—Buick is part of General Motors, and General Motors has had a policy for years, which I wouldn't knock; it's probably very good. Anything new, revolutionary, or different they want to try out, Oldsmobile always got it. Like the first front drive and the first—I can name ya—first automatic, so and so and so and so—Oldsmobile always got. So they're more innovative—well, it's not really Oldsmobile; it's really General Motors—just prefers to try it in that level price. But Buick's okay—someone buys a Buick, you know, which it's kind of a "so what?" car.

But Ford's a favorite of mine, generally, but they built some awful ones, some of those Thunderbirds. The first Thunderbirds were cute, and they made a lot of sense. Then they kept makin' 'em, which is common practice; it's how you do it in the United States. Like their annual model here is dumb. In Europe, why, they come out with a car that's good, and they build it the same way year after year. Then that sensible modification comes along—you do it, which makes sense and that. So I'm not too in favor of the annual change, but they do it. Put a little more geegaws on, but I guess American public likes it that way. But like your Thunderbird—'55—it was a wonderful car. And '56, '57 was okay. Then '58 was a little longer, and '59 and '50s it just got to be a The early '50s cars (or the '50s cars) handled good, you know. Later, they just got to be just a barge, just another thing in Thunderbird, and little ol' ladies drove 'em which is all right; a little ol' lady should have a car, but it just lost me entirely, and lost a lot of people.

And, of course, Corvette, which was similar, not identical—similar, that was a sports car, and it really was, and they've kept it. And Corvette has always been a sports car. I'll give Chevy credit. 'course, they had so many other models that Chevy alone covers almost the whole market; you can reach anything you want in a Chevrolet; that's a good car; that's a very good car. Ford and Chevy are excellent.

But cars I don't like are—well, there aren't too many any more. Well, Oldsmobile's a kind of a nothin' car. That's like a Buick; it's just for middle-class America. I mean it's a fine car for General Motors and for the American public; for me it's just an uninteresting car, just [shrugs]—. So I can't say they're a bad car; they're just uninteresting. There were some bad cars years ago. Today there aren't any bad cars; they're all pretty good.

You know, the problems they have to go through with the unions and the cost of materials and all, I'm amazed they can do it, but they sure can. Those big companies—especially General Motors—they do it so well. Ford is very good.

Chrysler's always having problems; they never have got it on correctly. I mean they've built some good cars, but they always have a tough time with their finances and things. They've always been that way, since the early '30s. Chrysler's always been—and they get a new management and come out with some neat stuff. And they always have a big load of debt, and their factories are kind of pass—usually, and it costs 'em more to put—you know, Plymouth costs more to build than an equivalent Ford or Chevrolet. So they have a handicap there.

Some of these things just seem to come and then die out forever, like the rumble seat. What does the rumble seat mean to you?

Well, that made a lot of sense, 'cause I had cars with a rumble seat. But it was just a way of taking two more people along. It was real “now” (and I suppose it is today) to have a roadster or a convertible coupe—a two-passenger car. If you had a, you know, four passenger, it was your folks' car; or five passenger, it was your folks' car, or you were kinda weird, you know. You had—there was just no hesitancy. And my first car was a roadster. My second car was a cabriolet. And my roadster didn't have a rumble seat, and only because they didn't put 'em in that car. But the cabriolet, the '29 Ford, did have a rumble seat. And it didn't hurt the appearance of the car when it was closed; and when it was open, why, it was so handy to take a couple of friends along. It made a lot of sense; it really did.

The other thing that has gone is the convertible.

Well, that's just in United States, as every other country builds convertibles. Fiat builds convertibles, and Rolls Royce builds convertibles. Just United States. And I don't know why; it's not illegal. Fact, there's a lot of body shops turning, you know, those so-called hardtops into convertibles nowadays. Just the factories decided to do that; I don't know why, 'cause it's not a safety thing, necessarily. I don't ride in a convertible—I don't believe they're as safe as a hardtop, but still motorcycles are legal—why, gee whiz, a convertible ought to be legal. You know, it's up to the individual.

Oh, I had a '32 Ford and a '33 Ford convertible. And then I got smart. That was my last convertible and never had one since. I may have told you that already, how unsafe they are, you know.

Well, one good example was Tom Mix [chuckles]; that's goin' way back. And he was a big star. And he got killed in a Cord convertible down in Arizona. He was drivin' fast, which is okay, but he hit this wash—and there's a place down there now (it's still there), and they have a little marker—“This is where Tom Mix died.” And he hit this thing at eighty miles an hour, and his Cord tipped over on him and squashed him flat.

That was when, I remember at the time, I'd just gotten out of my '33 convertible, and I had a Lincoln Zephyr (a hardtop); and I had been convinced—friends of mine had been hurt. So I was makin' speeches whenever anybody'd listen against convertibles. Then he died, and then I added him on. And then I had a whole list at one time of various movie stars, celebrities, that had gotten drunk and run off the road and tipped over and killed themselves. And if they'd been in a hardtop, they probably wouldn't've. A very dear friend of mine got killed in a convertible, so it just—

they're not safe. I'll ride in a convertible, but I'm super careful.

And then, of course, the old cars, they're all open, or most of 'em are. But that's a different world when you're drivin' them. And you're not goin' as fast, and you're driving very defensively. And [I'm] happy to say that general public, modern cars, give you [old cars] a lot of leeway; they're very kind—ninety-nine percent. And of course, you gotta watch for that one percent. But most of 'em just, you know, they stop, and they wave and let you through—. You're comin', and it's their turn to come out, and they'll just stay and [gestures wave] “C'mon,” you know, So the old cars— it's very easy. Modern car, a convertible isn't. That's the law of averages. You could drive a convertible every day for ten years and nothin'. But then, some idiot's thinkin' about somethin' else or he's drunk, comes through a boulevard stop at forty miles an hour and hits you in the side, and over you go, and—you've had it.

What kind of a car really do you think expresses your personality the best? I mean, when you think of “Bill Harrah,” what kind of car do you think of?

Oh, a twelve-cylinder Ferrari—huh! [Chuckles] See, Ferrari built nothin' but twelve-cylinder cars for years, and he still builds—well, all of his race cars are twelve cylinder. I like twelve cylinders—just the sound is good, and there's engineering reasons that a twelve-cylinder engine is an excellent design. But I've just loved twelve-cylinder Ferraris since my first one, which was in '58. They sell twelve-cylinder Ferraris in Europe, but they don't import 'em over here because of the crash thing. And they've come out with an eight cylinder, which we sell. It's an excellent car, go a hundred and fifty miles an

hour and everything; it's a Ferrari— Ferrari quality, Ferrari design, Ferrari engineering. But to me it isn't the kick that the—.

So I have a twelve—I had a twelve cylinder I was driving, and then it was an illegal car and I got caught up with. And they just pull the car out, you know; they confiscate the car. So then I got another one recently, and I'm having it legalized right now in California, which by doing that, they're putting in the crash things and the emission control, all that—things that are left off of 'em in Europe. So I'm expecting that; I get a daily report on it. In fact, it's— huh! [chuckles]—I'm so interested. Here it is in Kyle's report—"No approval to date for the 400 automatic," which is the first Ferrari I ever had with an automatic transmission, which doesn't matter—I like the shift. But they're workin' on it in L.A., and everything's approved—I think the bumpers aren't legal yet. So we had to change the bumpers. There's a fella that does it down there for a living—he modifies illegal cars into legal cars. So I should get it this month. And I just can't wait! That'll be my fun car.

Their engines are so unbelievable, how good they are. And they've been building the same engine fundamentally since they started, and that's the '40s to the '70s—that's thirty years. Just it's a little bigger, or it's quite a bit bigger; the design's exactly the same. And it's the same engine they race. And that's why they're so good, you know. The race engines are almost identical with the passenger car engine. You know, you can turn 'em seventy-five hundred r.p.m., eight thousand, and things that you can't even think of doin' with most cars. And they last forever. They're just so well made— just a super car.

In fact, I'm goin' to the factory the first of June again— I've been there several times. I love to go, just to see 'em building 'em and

the engineering and all. And I stayed away— well, I've been there three times. And then the public relations man (or whatever) , Manicardi, was here last month, or recently; he doesn't come around as often as we like. And he's a brilliant man. He's been with Ferrari—one of the few people that's been with Ferrari since he started. And, of course, Manicardi speaks nine million languages. And I've known him since I've had Ferraris. We're friends, I'd say.

So he was here. And we had dinner and the whole thing, and visited, and he looked at our new place and da da da da, and how many cars we're gonna get this year—just very pleasant. And he said, "When are you comin' to the factory?"

And I said, "Well, I don't have any plans."

And he said, "Well, you should!"

And I said, "Well—." And Kyle, our manager goes every year. And I said, "Well, I don't like—" I said, "I'd come every month, but," I said, "I just don't want to bug you." [Laughter]

And I can just picture—"Harrah's comin', and oh my God, we gotta take him to lunch, and we're so busy today and—" And Mr. Ferrari, who's very important, and you get to meet Mr. Ferrari.

And I thought, "Why, there's a million things he'd rather do than meet me." I can picture it at HAC, you know, and I'm not "anti-people." But someone wants to write a letter—you know, "Mr. Harrah," so and so, "and I've admired you," and da da da. "I'm coming out sometime; could I get to say hello? And I want—" you know.

And I—"Sure, sure! Yeah, fine, why not?"

And so it's always when your desk is like this, and the phone's ringin', and so on, so on, and then they'll say, "Well, Mr. So-and-so is here."

I—"Who's that?"

So—"Well, he wrote you, and you said you could see him."

And I say, "Today?"

"Yeah, here's his letter," you know.

So you gotta—you know, I know how it is. And they come in, and your mind isn't on it, and it's—so—. Maybe Mr. Ferrari's better organized than I am (I don't know)—hope so. [Laughter]

But anyway, I said, "Okay, I'm comin' over."

And he said, "Well, when?"

And I said—which shows that he meant it. And I said, "Well, I'm gonna pick up my boy in Lugano on June first."

And he said, "Well, that's perfect!" 'cause he said, "I'm gonna be there and Mr.—" (see, he traveled a lot). And he said, "Mr. Ferrari's gonna be there," or "Il Commendatore," and uh—which is an Italian title kind of, which he uses, and he doesn't use). But he said, "We're both gonna be there, and so we have an appointment for June fifth, Monday."

And I said, "Well, can I bring my boy? He's a car nut."

He said, "Bring him along!"

So I'm goin' back to the factory then. And John, of course, that'll be his first time there. That'll be a big thrill going to the Ferrari factory.

Also, Mr. Ferrari—I don't know why he—I guess he likes me or something, or maybe it's ego on my part—but I told you, the distributorship—and I'm sure you don't give things away, but he took me for a ride one time—. He can't speak English, and I can't speak Italian, but we can communicate fine. And the new—it was a 1969; I have a picture of it; it was a new model, entirely new. I'd never even seen one (I'd read about it). And they had one there, and he took me for a ride in it. And just Mr. Ferrari and I—what a thrill that was! And he's an old-time race driver,

you know. And at that time, he was seventy years old—the next day. And so he drove me, and he just drove beautifully, just like an ex-race—just perfect, just zip zip zip zip zip [gestures wheel turning].

But every time I go, he visits with me and he does it so nice. And we have an interpreter there. "How've you been? How are things in Nevada," da da da da da—. And he does it—which I learned something from him was, he does it as though he had the whole day. And you know damn well he's got a hundred other things. But he'd just sit there, you know, and he's so relaxed and da da da and, you know, da da da, and "Tell me more," you know. And I'm sure that he just would rather do other things—you know—maybe the first three minutes, but after that I'm sure he'd rather do a million things than talk to me! So in fact, I have to tell myself—'cause I'm so intrigued, you know, and I'm always learnin' somethin' about the new model or somethin'—but I have to force myself to leave, you know. In fact, when I have someone—like I took Rome Andreotti one time 'cause he could interpret, you know, and he was along anyway, so it made it nice. And he got to see the factory. But I said, "Rome, kick me in the ankle after about—" and he did, you know. About ten minutes, I'm goin' and Rome'll go—[laughter].

Last time I was there was—and he might've just been feeling good. You said I'm too modest, but I know it wasn't my personality. But instead of just sittin' in his office, he indicated he wanted to show me around. He took me through the factory, and of course, I'd been through the factory before. But he took me, and they had a new addition that he showed me, and we're walkin'—and of course, what a thrill it was to walk through the factory with Mr. Ferrari because every workman there, you know, almost saluted when he walked by.

And so as I told you, Manicardi met me and all, and then Mr. Ferrari and I left. And he showed me through the factory, and he took me in the engine—where they test the engines, which I—I’d been in there, but I’ll tell you about it. It’s very interesting in that every Ferrari engine is broken in before you get the car because—so you can take a Ferrari out and drive it a hundred and fifty miles and hour the day you get it. And they run ’em in, and they have—you go in, and it’s a soundproof place. You go in there—it’s terribly noisy. And they have individual closed—like maybe so by so [about six feet by four feet]. There’s a glass and a door, and you can look in (it’s a room); and there’s an engine that’s hooked up to power things, so it’s under power—under load. Just to run an engine free with no load, you’re not accomplishing anything; but under load it’s the same as breakin’ it in. So they run ’em for—well, enough hours, so they’re broken in. And there’ll be maybe ten, twelve engines in a row—[loudly] rrrrrrr! And there’s gauges, you know, so this one has so many hours; that one has so many hour[s]. (I told earlier about the wind tunnel room.)

’course, I’m not gonna tell anybody about their designs. And of course, I’m like a little kid—there were maybe fifty of ’em—the old ones, which I knew, and then the newer ones. But he’s walkin’ through, and I can’t stop, you know, but I’m lookin’ [laughter] and wishin’ I had photographic brain so I could picture ’cause there were some far-out designs there, which are top secret, of course. And I could see, you know, this is the ’78 Ferrari, and that is the ’80 Ferrari, and there’s the ’82 to ’3. That was a happy day!

I took delivery at the factory one time, a Ferrari, too. That was a fun thing. I’d always wanted to do that, so I thought, “Well, I’ll do it.” It was the new model, which was very exciting. So I got there and went to the factory,

and I didn’t know anybody then hardly. See, I was a dealer then; I wasn’t a distributor. That was ’61, ’62. And I got it—and of course, I can drive okay, but I was a little nervous about driving over there. I’d read all the manuals, you know, no speed limit; I loved that. So I thought, “Well, how am I going to do this?” There were several places I wanted to go over there. And I thought, “Well, I’ll just try it.” But it was a little tiny car. And my wife and I, we had a lot of luggage; no way could we do it.

So we started from (where’d we start from?) Rome, and we hired a car and driver. We said, “We want a driver for five days to a week, a car, and we want a station wagon,” which are kinda scarce over there, but we got one. I think it was a Fiat, of course. That was a pretty good car. And we had this driver who we got to like, and he drove the station wagon with the luggage. And so then we worked it out, and it just worked slick. The towns are very confusing, and no way—like I tried to get through some towns, and I’d have a map. And you’d go, and you weren’t sure which street, and some streets didn’t have road signs. And then you’d stop, and you’d say, “Where is so-and-so?”

And they’d go, “Doobladada,” you know—just hopeless!

So I did that, and it was just very frustrating. So I thought, “We’re doin’ this wrong.” And then I figured it out. And so I had this Italian-speaking fella, so here we come to a town, and he would drive through. And I’d follow him, and then we’d get on the edge and he would—knew all what I wanted. As soon as we got on the outskirts, then the road and the signs were fine; you couldn’t miss the road. So then I’d go down the road a hundred miles an hour, whatever I felt like driving, and we had a point we would meet. And maybe if it was lunch, why we’d meet, you know, and sometimes he’d be helpful

there, although that wasn't as necessary, but it was good to keep in touch. And then when we'd come to a city—like we went to urn—what's that big shipping port on the west of Italy?

It's big, like all the cars come out of there. It's a big industrial—. But we went through there, and it was just absolutely impossible—I could still be there, ten years later. But I got behind him, and he just went zip zip zip zip zip zip. And we got to the edge, and away I went.

So then I was heading for Monaco; I'd never been there, or I hadn't been there in years. So we drove to Monaco, and that was a funny experience. We got there, and the Ferrari was—you know, eyes—boy, look at that car! It was a new model, and everybody's real excited. So we drove up to the custom—when we left Italy, no problem. And then we came up to the border and to Monaco, principality of Monaco. And so the fellas, or two of 'em came out, and they looked at the car, and they looked—or, "Open the hood," so I opened the hood. And they wanted my papers, so I had the papers; I had Nevada plates on it. But I had the title; I had everything, you know. And they looked at 'em they looked at 'em, and, "Oooh," they looked, and oh, they're frowning and all and—(jabber, jabber)!

And I said, "Well, I don't know what—what are you talking about?"

(Jabber) real excited, you know.

And I remember my wife said, "Well, gee whiz," you know, "boy!"

And I said, "Well, cool it—we'll do what we can."

And I actually thought there was somethin' terrible wrong and they were gonna confiscate the car or something. It was just—yelling and, "Yah! Yah!" you know.

So then he—I was ahead of him—so then he came up, you know. And he come

walkin' up, and he said, "What's the matter, Mr. Harrah?"

I said, "I don't know!" I said, "I gave him the green ticket, and I gave him this, and I gave him my title and the numbers. And they looked at the motor number, and it's the same as on here. I don't know what the beef is."

So he said, "Well—." So he took 'em, and he—(jabbers). And they kinda went in the office and—(jabbers), and I'm lookin'; you could see—it was glass, you know. (Jabbers) And then they're laughin' [imitates laughing]. And so he came out and he said, "We can go."

And I said, "Okay." And I got in the car and very carefully started it, and I thought, "Hope so."

And we started out, and as I left the two fellas, they went like this [salutes], you know—"Well, fine!" So I got down the road, and I don't know if I stopped right away—I might've; but it wasn't far to the hotel anyway, just a few hundred yards. I said, "What did you do? What, what, what, what?"

And he said, "I gave 'em a dollar!" [Laughter] Or a thousand lire, whatever it was! And all we wanted was a little help [laughing]. That's the way it is over there, especially, you know. And you hardly ever get turned down no matter who it is—. I actually thought for a minute, "I'm gonna lose this nice new car, my—!"

Then we drove all over. We went into Switzerland in the car and we had a wonderful time. I haven't done it since—love it over there; I love to drive over there, but it just—it isn't worth it with the car behind and the whole thing. Now I just rent a car and a driver—sit back and enjoy it. I have one driver I use quite a bit, so—.

Do you have any superstitions about cars?

No.

Or some personal superstitions that are kind of acted out through your cars?

No. Sorry [chuckles].

Or something that you think of as sort of folktales around cars, about the way some car came into being, or that some cars are “lucky” and some cars are “unlucky,” more than just safe or unsafe?

Oh. They're all lucky. I don't think so. There are some fables and many of those—they're just untrue, you know, like Henry Ford saying you can have a Ford Model T—he did say it. You can have any color you want as long as it's black (that's when they only made 'em black). And that was true, but that was just for a short time, 'cause the first Fords were (what) multicolor—1903, 1904, through 1913 or '14—you could get colored Fords. They came in colors. Black was unusual, or none. Then about '15 they were all black till '26, and then they were colors again. So it was just ten-year period that it was true. Some people—the way it was interpreted was that all Model T Fords, or all Fords, were black and they weren't at all. A lot of pretty colors.

But I don't know. Sorry.

Do you have some favorite advertising slogans, some of the things that you think sold more cars? Americas' car”—

Oh, I don't know any slogans that actually sold any. It just had a slogan 'cause it's the popular thing or customary thing to do. I think Chevrolet's slogan for years when I was in Chevis was “Economical.” But that isn't why I bought my Chevy [laughing],

They used to have that thing about, “Watch the Fords go by.”

Yeah. It doesn't hurt anything, but I don't think it sells any really. But you're advertising, you gotta say somethin'. See, Ford didn't advertise for years, you know. And things were goin' good, and the Model T days, he didn't advertise. Later they started.

There's a new book out on the history of Ford I just finished—really a wonderful one, best one I ever read. I read it on my trip over to Australia. And it starts with Henry, Sr. when he was an electrician engineer for the Detroit Power Company and right on up through today and Henry II (the second). It's a behind-the-scenes kind of a story, and I can't think of the name of it.

It's not flattering to Henry, and it's not—see, many books on Henry Ford, Sr., he was just perfect; he did—and a lot of 'em, of course, he engineered, and—. He was a genius, he was perfect, his life was perfect, and all that. And in this book it tells where he was perfect and where he wasn't perfect; it's very revealing there. And Edsel, it tells a lot about him and where he was perfect and where he wasn't. And I knew Henry, Sr. was very tough on Edsel, although it was his only son and delighted with him and very proud of him; but still he dominated him just somethin' terrible. Edsel couldn't claim—and you know, there were millions of dollars—Edsel had millions of dollars in there, but he couldn't call his, you know—just couldn't make too good decisions; it was very pitiful. And that's true.

And then how the company and old Henry dominated it, and he was an old, over-the-hills guy, and the company was losin' millions of dollars a month, you know. And then Edsel's widow and I think Mrs. Ford, Sr. got together with Henry, and he was in his twenties (Henry, second [Henry II]), and by a coup took over the company and saved the company. The way it was goin'—Harry Bennett, Ford had hired years before as kind

of a strikebreaker and a bodyguard, and it got where Harry Bennett was running the company, and just he totally dominated Ford for many years and just makin' all kinds of terrible decisions. And if it had gone on that way, the Ford Motor Company would've gone bankrupt. Henry, Jr. [II] in his twenties took over, and here he is president of this. And then it tells how he—and he did—he's no brilliant guy; he wasn't very good in school, but he's just a commonsense guy. And a few slogans he used in there that I've kept—like one I like very much is (oh let me get it right)—um—. Well, like he was recently caught driving in California with a lady that wasn't his wife; he was drunk driving. That was within the last year, in northern California there somewhere around Pebble Beach or somethin'. And he was arrested by the highway patrol, and in the paper here it is—"Henry Ford II arrested drunk driving with a twenty-three-year-old model," da da da, and he's married, you know. And you think, "Wow, what's goin' on?" It's in the book.

He says, "Whenever somethin' like that happens," he says, "and the press gets on ya (and all this)," he said (let me get it right, oh), "don't explain, don't complain." [Laughter] Which, you know, we get, or we think we get a lot of criticism or some criticism in the press, and you know, "Oooh, why'd they say that?" And also, "Why—why—" you know.

And the thing is—"No comment."

Write what you want. "Don't explain. Don't complain."

He's done a super job—Henry Ford II. And it was tough, you know. Everybody shootin' at him from another angle.

Well, they've done a lot of good over the years. And Henry Ford, he did a lot of good, like he was the first man to—I think wages were two-sixty, and he paid everybody five dollars, when the going wage was two dollars

and sixty cents. Things like that. But he did a lot of goofy things, too; like he had that peace ship to Europe, you know, which was—. You know, he was so successful, he got a big ego and was thinkin' of runnin' for president. Well, he did—he ran for senator in Michigan (I think) and just got beat by a few votes, and that hurt his pride. And then he decided on this peace ship. And he told the then president (I forget who it was); he won the cooperation of the government. And they told him, "That isn't how we're doin' it. We're workin' hard, we're—" you know.

So then he did it on his own, and he got a few friends and celebrities—I think he got Edison in on it. But most of his friends just said, "Well, that's dumb!"

And he took this peace ship and went to Europe with it. And everybody got to Europe, and they just went, "What do you want?" You know—"Get out of here!"

So then when it was such a total failure, then he took some big transoceanic steamer home, you know—very quietly, and the peace ship kinda -stuck back and Henry Ford snuck back and you didn't read any more about it! And it cost him millions.

But it's always interesting to me how people handle their money, like I know I do goofy things with mine sometimes, but, things he would do with his and be real cheap in this respect, and then, you know, real—you know, money didn't matter in the other.

Then one thing he did, it somebody did him a favor, he really liked it (like from a bellboy or somethin'), he'd give em a Ford, which isn't thousands of dollars; in those days, at one time they retailed as low as two hundred and sixty dollars. Probably his was a hundred and some dollars—he was givin' 'em, you know. He did that quite often.

All in all he was quite a guy—Henry Ford, Sr.

What do you think is in the future for the automobile industry now, with the problems of pollution and complaints about spoiling the environment with the freeways and—?

Well, that just gets tougher all the time. Like, you know, casino business or whatever business you're in gets tougher all the time. There's more government and more restrictions, and you just do the best you can, that's all. It's just gonna get tougher and tougher, but I think twenty years from now we'll be still driving internal combustion; there'll be some electric and all that, but it's such a super design, so cheap to build and so efficient, and they can get all the pollution out of it just up to, you know, ninety percent, which is quite reasonable. So I think they'll be smaller and lighter, and then they'll change the looks every once in a while so you get interested, you know.

If you take care of a car—any car today—if you take proper care of it, it's good for sixty to a hundred thousand miles with no trouble at all. And so that's ten to twenty years for most people. So they're not comin' back to the market too often. My point was, maybe you would normally come back in ten years. But if they make one that's kinda super pretty, you might come back in eight years (or something). They don't change the design to please themselves; they do it to sell cars, which works pretty good, too. Especially like that '64 Mustang, you know, that was just a revolutionary car. It was just a car whose time was now. And of course, the Edsel—wasn't anything wrong with an Edsel except its time was wrong. There's two good examples: the Mustang was just a tremendous success, and Edsel was a tremendous failure. I wouldn't criticize either one.

THE COLLECTOR OF ANTIQUE CARS

Now in antique cars, you want to start right at the— where?

The beginning of your interest in antique cars. Why antique cars instead of antique bedsteads or something like that, you know?

Yeah, I was always interested in cars from the time I was a little tiny boy. Didn't I tell you about the hubcaps and radiator, nameplates and things? Why I was always interested, I was alone a lot because my father worked, and where we lived it was very isolated—on South Beach—we were about the only house down there. Our only neighbors were a widow and a daughter about my age and her mother (the three of 'em). They didn't even have a car 'cause there was a streetcar there. And we had cars, and that was it. And so my knowledge of cars, or whenever a car would stop or we'd be downtown, I'd look at all of 'em, and—kinda self-taught. There's a car I didn't know (of course, I knew Fords and things)—but a car I didn't know, then I'd go look at the hubcap or the radiator, and then I would—just I didn't

try to memorize it; it just was embellished in my mind.

And I have one funny story—well, I have a bunch of 'em, but one I like is the Isotta Fraschini is a very famous Swiss car—oh, wait, it isn't Swiss; it's—what the heck is it? I better find that out. It's like a Rolls Royce, but then we have several of 'em. But the nameplate is a big "IF." And it impressed me when I saw it, and down in Venice we didn't get many foreign cars. I remember Rolls Royces, the big thrill down there, because it just wasn't that kind of neighborhood where those kind of cars showed up. But this Isotta came down there one time, and I saw it, and my father came home that night, and I couldn't wait to ask him. I said, "I saw a new car today, an 'if!'" [Laughs] 'course, he knew a lot about American cars, but he didn't know much about European cars, so he was in the dark as much as I was.

But another story I like to tell on that was I did memorize these cars; I loved it. And I had an uncle, Rod Burnham, who was married to my aunt, Isabelle, and they were

very close—my aunt and Rod and my father and mother, and they palled around together a lot—real good friends, and so we saw a lot of 'em. And Rod knew a lot about cars, and he always had an interesting car, kind of a sporty car. And he knew a lot about cars, but sometimes he was a little blowhard—not too much, but just a little. And my father discovered I had so much knowledge, so one time we were goin' somewhere—Rod and my father and I, just the three of us in the car. And so my father started this game; he said, "Hey, I know. Bill, you know cars pretty good, and Rod, you know em real good. Let's play a little game here and see who can name the most" [laughing]. And of course, I won it hands down, and my uncle, he was a good guy, really. He was amazed, and also he was a good loser. And of course, my father was just tickled to death that I beat 'im 'cause we really got into some—you know, the Fords and Chevies and all were easy, but then we got into some kinda rare ones. I knew all of 'em, just about.

So anyway, that's how it started, and then I couldn't wait to—. I would love cars; I was around cars, and I drove my first car when I was—well, my father taught me to drive when I was eight, I think, which was nice of him. We went to Big Bear Lake a lot, and there was nobody up there, so we could do anything. And then he left the Hudson—did you hear the Hudson story (see Chapter 1)?

So I drove that around, and I was only eight then. I drove it all around Big Bear. And so I drove, and my father was wonderful at lettin' me drive—just wherever it made sense, where it didn't hurt anything. And so I drove a car quite a bit.

Then when I was—the law in California then was fourteen years old to get a driver's license. And of course, I wanted one so bad I could almost die. And so I was twelve, I think, and I asked my father if I could have a

driver's license. And much to my surprise, he said, "Sure!" And of course, he had to falsify on the application; but being a lawyer, why, he knew exactly how to do it. And he didn't swear to it; he just signed it somehow, so it left him free 'n' clear. I was a little concerned—I was very proud of my driver's license, but I was a little concerned that I might get in trouble. And someone found out about it from one of the family, and they said, "Gee, aren't you worried?"

And he said, "No, no, no," and then he had this example that I was also—in law school one time, of a similar situation, that a young girl was—she was underage, and I don't know whether she had a driver's license or not, but was driving a car, and there was an accident. Someone was injured, and the prosecution claimed that because she was underage, why, was the whole problem. Her defense attorney—and the judge went along—was her age had absolutely nothing to do with the accident; the question was, was she drivin' the car properly or not? And it was shown that she was driving properly, so they exonerated her in any liabilities. And that was made clear to me. So anyway, I was the only kid around with a driver's license. I sure took advantage of it.

But the interest in the antiques, in collecting them, actually, is it a financial ability to be able to collect these things, or is it something that you just had to do?

Well, it's a combination. I was always interested in the cars. Of course, as I got older and the Model T Fords, they became antiques. When I was a little kid, they were the new thing you bought and drove. But they were cars, and I liked them, 'course. And I really didn't know there was an antique car society, or that there were collectors of

antique cars cause where I lived, that just was nonexistent. And then as I got older and I was in my twenties and maybe early thirties, I didn't know it. I remember seem' a picture in *The LA Times* of a friend of mine, Dick Teague, who's a car collector, and I've known him forever. He's now the stylist for American Motors—a real good friend. But there was a picture of him and a 1906 Cadillac in the *LA Times*, and I thought, "Gee, look at that old Cadillac! i didn't know there was anything that old existed." And I thought, "Gee, it'd be fun to have something like that." And I didn't pay any attention. I mean, an old car to me was a big rarity; whenever I saw one, I couldn't believe it. And hardly ever saw one; it was just almost like Fate lettin' me not to see 'em yet 'cause I just didn't see any antique cars. I would'a bet there weren't fifty in the country, and what were, were just in museums.

Then this friend of mine, this Freddie Vogel, had a brother Johnny Vogel, who had acquired a 1911 Ford and a 1911 Maxwell. And when I used to visit Freddie in Hollywood (and Freddie had a garage down there—service station), then I used to hang around in this. I think the Ford and the Maxwell were there, and they were tinkering with them, and I was very interested. And Johnny was kind of a—(what's the word?) kind of scatterbrained, kind of go-go-go kind of a guy. And Freddie, who was the younger brother, was quite conservative. Johnny was the go-guy, and Freddie was more stable, although Johnny was a good guy. And Johnny loved cars, but he was kind of carefree, careless; and I preached to him, as I was older—I preached to both boys. I was a good friend about driving and car safety and good tires and don't ride in convertibles and all, because you might roll over, you know, at high speed.

So anyway, Johnny, who was a real good friend, and he had become a good friend, he came up here a lot, and he was havin' troubles with the Army, and he was single and they were drafting, and he was workin' around tryin' to get out of it, but he really couldn't. And anyway, he was down in L.A., and he was comin' to Reno, and he just took off the spur of the moment, which is the way he did things. He had a big dog. And in a Lincoln Continental convertible, he was driving up 395 at ninety miles an hour, whatever, and he blew a rear tire. He was in the used car business. I think it was one of the cars on his lot or something, but he hadn't checked the tires, and it was a faulty tire—it was a worn-out tire. And he blew it, anyway, it rolled the car. And of course, a convertible—you can get killed real easy. I don't know if it threw him out and it landed on him or what, but it killed him and the dog both, which was a big tragedy 'cause he was still in his twenties and had everything to live for. I can still remember his funeral; it was such a sad thing. And of course, I was there, but all of his friends—I was maybe the oldest young person there. I mean his mother was there, of course, but I was five years older, maybe more. And still all these twenty-year-old kids, and here Johnny's dead. Boy, it was real sad.

Anyway, that left the Ford and the Maxwell, and Freddie Vogel had no interest in them. And I did. And they were old cars, and I thought, "Gee, they'd be nice." And it was kinda funny. By then I knew a little about the cars, and it was kinda real funny. It was Mrs. Vogel, who was just one of the sweetest ladies in the whole world and a very generous lady. [Consults book] But anyway, on this Maxwell—yeah, two thousand dollars. It was worth about a thousand, so I thought— you know—and I didn't want to—I loved her. She'd done so many nice things for me. And so I

wanted to buy the Maxwell, and it was worth around a thousand. After the funeral and all and things had settled down a little, either she called me or somehow and we're talking, and she said, "Bill, Johnny wanted you to have the Maxwell and Ford, if you wanted them."

And I said, "Well, that's fine, Mrs. Vogel, but I don't want 'em as a gift; I would like to buy them."

And she said, "Well, that's what I really meant. You can buy them."

And I said, "Well, that's fine. How much?"

And she said, "Well, Johnny has let me see—" and she dug out a letter. She said Johnny was always valuing everything real high. So he had the Maxwell down at two thousand dollars, and I was kinda proud of myself 'cause it wasn't the time to bargain. She said, "Is that all right?"

And I said, "Oh, that's fine." And I paid two thousand. Let me see how much the Ford was, 'cause it wasn't worth as much. Fifteen hundred for the Ford.

That was for the first two, and I got them. Maxwell was the more interesting car 'cause there was fewer Maxwells, a lot of Model Ts. So we restored the Maxwell. By we, I had a mechanic that worked on my cars and worked on other things for me and—pretty good mechanic. And we made a terrible mistake in doing it, as an antique car should be restored authentically as the way it was. A 1911 Maxwell should be restored the way a 1911 Maxwell was. But I didn't recognize that at the time, and not knowing anybody, I was all on my own. And as I hopped up about every car I owned, I hopped up the Maxwell or—Jimmy Guller was the mechanic, and I—and we really hopped it up, so it would go. And then the exterior, we restored it, but we did it wrong because we had no original—which got me into libraries. If I'd had the original catalog, I would have restored it the way it should

look; but I just restored it the way I got it, and it had many mistakes in it. So that's the way it was. And in fact, in the museum now, we have this Maxwell as it was, which has many things wrong with it. And then right beside it we have one that's correct and then a little sign explaining that the first car we didn't know any better, and we restored it wrong; and then this is what it should've looked like.

I went on my first tour (I think that was '47), and I showed up in L.A. with my Maxwell. I didn't know anybody. Well, I found an application to the Horseless Carriage Club in the papers that I got with the Maxwell. So I joined the Horseless Carriage Club, and then I was real excited. They had this magazine, and there were other collectors—oh, that was wonderful—and then they had a tour coming up, so I sent in my application to the tour. It was, I remember, from Los Angeles to San Diego. So I sent in my tour, and I showed up with a Maxwell, and, didn't know anybody. It was almost like the first day of school; I was kinda scared. Fortunately, first person I met was—I put my car in a garage in downtown L.A., and an old-timer came in with an old car. Doc [George] Shafer was his name, who I knew for many years. He had quite a few cars, and he was a real old-timer in the club. Fact, when he died, I got most of his cars. But old Doc was the kind of blowhard type. He misdated everything on purpose. But he came in. I got quite an education just listening to him for a couple of hours. That was the night before the tour.

Then the day of the tour I showed up, and there were a lot of other cars, I was real excited, and got started out. In fact, I was so excited I didn't really drive the Maxwell the way I should have. And then I finally figured out what I was doing wrong, and then I got along fine. Mine was a very little car, and there were some big cars, so they all got way ahead.

I remember (huh!) [chuckles] the lunch stop was in Long Beach, and I got there just as they were all leaving [laughing], but I didn't let it bother me too much. We had a little trouble, but this mechanic I had was pretty good—Jimmy. We worked on it and fixed it.

But anyway, I think our second stop was at Oceanside, and that's where I met Bud Catlett. He was a real old-timer in the club. He was a policeman in Sacramento. He loved old cars. I'll never forget, he came up to me, and he was so polite, and, "Mr. Harrah, I'm Bud Catlett. How do you do?" And he looked at the Maxwell, and instead of sayin', "This is wrong, and the radiator's wrong, and the upholstery's wrong, and the fenders are wrong," and not even talkin' about the hop-up part, he said, "Gee, that's a nice car," which it was. It was real shiny. And then he asked me about the radiator. He said, "Is this the right radiator?"

And I said, "Well, gee, I don't know."

And he said, "Well, I thought"—he didn't say—which was a fact, because it had a early—it was—. The early Maxwells used this type of radiator, so because of the radiator, I had dated it as a 1907, and it was really a 1911. So he said, "This 1907," he said, "how did you—" only he's real polite. He said, "Is this a 1907?" which was about a million things to prove it isn't. He said, "Why did you think—?"

I said, "Well, the radiator."

And he said, "Well, yes, that is. That's an early radiator." But he said, "I think—" and he didn't always—he wasn't positive. He said, "I think the early ones had semi-elliptic springs, and yours has full elliptic." And he said, "I think the early ones have—" so on, so on, so on, so on. And he pointed out all these things, and I was a little defensive. I didn't like anybody telling me my 1907 car was a 1911 car 'cause older was better (at least I thought it was). So I was a little defensive, but Bud was so nice.

Then, as the tour went along and I had trouble and Bud helped out, and we got to be pretty good friends, just on the tour. So then when I got home and I really researched the car, and I found that he was absolutely right and I was as wrong as could be. And in the meantime, we were corresponding and talking and visiting back and forth, and I've never forgotten how polite he was 'cause he could've come up and said, "Dummy, this is—" da da da da. But he was so nice.

So we became real close friends, and we used to laugh about it because me and my wife and he and his wife visited back and forth, and they'd come up here and we'd go visit them, and we'd go on trips together, and we just became very close friends. And here he was a policeman in Sacramento, and I was a casino operator in Reno; you just couldn't imagine two people that would have less in common, but the cards just bounced together. And we're still friends.

He worked for me for many years when he retired from the police force, and he was up here as my car buyer for ten or twelve years, maybe longer. And then he retired from that (he had some money), but still, we keep him on a retainer as an expert; on special jobs, we want somebody to go look at somethin'—he loves to travel—so he'll go look at somethin' for us. And then the fact we're going on a tour in Australia in April, I'm taking a car, and some friends of mine from Cleveland are taking a car, and Bud Catlett is going to borrow a car down there. He and another fella and their wives are gonna borrow a car in Australia. So they were goin' over and they were talkin', so we're taking our own plane over, and I invited Bud and his friend to ride with us, which they're going to do. And then we'll be on the tour together, of course. Just fun.

I bet he loved that job.

Yeah, he did, and he's real good at it. And he's bought cars—I've bought a lot of cars you couldn't buy just by my approach, but Bud—I learned a lot of that from Bud. Bud has bought cars, many, many cars, that just, no way you could buy. People have tried and tried. And Bud is nice, and he has a big grin; he's a real sincere person, and he just goes in with lots of time.

And one of my favorites was, I think he got three cars— either New York or New Jersey; it was New York area, and the man that owned 'em was a policeman on the, I think, New York police force. I think he was a detective. We'd heard of the cars he had for years, but he wouldn't—anybody get around there, he'd just say, "Get out of here," you know. New Jersey. Paddy Boyle was his—. He had these cars, and so I'd heard—there's Pope-Hartfords—we have quite a few of them. And they're all four-cylinder, but they made a very few six-cylinder Pops. And so we'd heard of this one, this one in L.A. which was untouchable, and we'd heard of this one that Paddy Boyle had. That's the reason that we wanted to get it, which everybody said, "He won't even talk to you, let alone—"

So Bud went and looked up his place and went there and rang the bell, and rang it and rang it. Finally Paddy came to the door and said something like—and Bud said, "Paddy Boyle," and before he could even say, "I'm Bud Catlett," or anything, the guy says, "Get the hell—what do you want?"

He said, "Well, I wanted your old car—"

He said, "Get the hell out of here!" or words to that effect. And he'd opened the door about a crack, and Bud didn't put his foot in it, but he's tryin' to talk through the crack. Real negative. So the door was just about closed, so Bud at a last ditch effort said, "I understand you're a retired policeman."

And Paddy said, "Well—so what?"

And Bud said, "I'm a retired policeman!"

And the door opened just a little—"Where?"

"Sacramento." And Bud had the, you know, credentials. "I was a so-and-so, so-and-so, twenty-three years," da da da.

And Paddy said, "Oh, were you? Really? Ah! Well, come in a minute." And of course, Bud knew all the things to say, then; he got a look at it. And it wasn't for sale, but Bud just kept workin', and then we got it. Within a year we got it.

But then Paddy liked Bud very much, and he had many other cars. And we got other cars just like open the trickle and then the dam, you know, and here they came, just—. And they weren't cheap, but they weren't high; they were just market, which was fine because they were all rare stuff.

That's interesting that a retired policeman should be one of these important collectors. Nowadays you wouldn't find that kind of person collecting them, would you?

Well, no, because then—see, Bud was in it long before I was. And he tells many stories, you know, like the car that he turned down, they wanted fifty dollars and he offered twenty-five. Now the car's worth five thousand dollars. And of course, I tell jokes on him. He had a Mercer that I bought from him, a 1917 Mercer, and it—Sporting is the model. But then Mercers are always desirable; they're a wonderful car. But this was rare because it had very few miles, like three or four thousand miles. It was like a brand-new car. So Bud and I—and he'd come up here, and I'd—he didn't drink very well, and I drank pretty good, so I tried to get him drunk. He watched it pretty careful, but we had some good times. But I remember on the Mercer—and I kept him out real late. And so he wanted—oh, let me look

that up. Let me get that right. Well, I think he asked seven-fifty.

And I said, "Ehhh, that's too much." And I said, "I'll give you five hundred."

And Bud said, "Oh, poohy!" And then he said, "Well, how 'bout six-fifty?"

And I said, "No, no, no, no, no!" And I always liked to gamble, flip a coin, 'cause we were kind of at (a) dead end there. So I said, "Okay, I'll match you six-fifty or five hundred." So Bud won. So I paid him six-fifty. So the car today is worth eight, ten thousand, maybe twelve, fifteen, possibly. And I still—when it's fun, like when we're at a party or somethin', we'll talk old times, and I'll say, "Remember, Bud [laughing], when you beat me out of—made me pay six-fifty?" [Laughing]

There was another one, a Pope-Hartford; he had a PopeHartford, and that was the first one—I just loved PopeHartfords from the time I was a little kid. And there were some in the [Horseless Carriage] Club, and when I got—and I thought, "Gee, I'll never own one of those." And Bud had one, and I just—oooh, I wanted that so bad! So got him up on the same story, and we're out and drinkin' and all, and I kept him up all night. Finally I bought the Pope-Hartford for fifteen hundred dollars. I think he thought at the time— you know, I think the way I got it was I just offered so much money, he couldn't turn it down. Of course, that car today is—well, I still have it, of course, and it's worth, oh, auction, that would bring twenty-five thousand dollars today. But he's not the kind of guy that looks back at all. You know, he's—and he always has cars.

When he retired he moved to Minden, and I didn't understand it for some time 'cause it's so far and his interests are here. But he bought a little piece of land down there and built—he's fail real handy guy; he can do anything. He built this house by himself, and it's a cute little house, and his wife of all

these years—they had one child who's grown and long gone—and they just get along super. In fact, he's always been into cars, and motorcycles, of course, being [a] motorcycle cop. And he used to ride one, and I didn't know them then, but he and Bernice for one vacation, they rode their motorcycle to Miami, Florida and back, if you can imagine, and just got along fine! [Laughs] To each his own.

It was so funny, one time—we used to travel a lot, too. We'd go lookin' at cars here and there. And I was always a fast driver, but I'd get tickets. And Bud drove just as fast as I did or faster (and we always took my car 'cause I always had a real, good car), and he'd drive ninety (and California was sixty miles an hour then, I think) and he'd never get stopped. And I just couldn't understand it. I thought he had a secret thing. For years, I thought he was—some way he held, his head or something. But he was just lucky. 'cause finally one time we were on a tour [of] United States or a lot of western United States (this was in '53, I think, in a Chrysler of mine).

We visited all the Horseless Carriage Clubs; they're called regional groups, and they're individual. We had a president in the national Horseless Carriage Club that'd been in there for nine years or somethin'. And he had a board of directors; unfortunately, he got me on the board, and I discovered what was goin' on. But he had some figureheads on the board—I think there were nine of 'em—and they just reelected him, and a lot of 'em weren't even car people; they were just friends. And he was one of those fellas that like to run things, so he was the perpetual president.

Well, when I got into it, I could see what a mess it was. So I talked to Bud on it, and he'd seen it for years, and then another fella who lives here in Reno, Harry Johnson, a Horseless Carriage fella who then lived in Long Beach,

the three of us got to talkin', and more of us in the Horseless— and we got to get rid of this guy, and how we gonna do it? And there's a board of directors election every year, and there were staggered terms, I think.

But anyway, I wrote letters to all the members, and then Bud and I and Harry Johnson visited all these regional groups and made speeches against Bothwell—Lindley Bothwell was his name. And fact, some places where Bothwell was very popular we'd go in and we'd be insulted—almost run us out of the place. "Get outa here, you bums!" 'course, because I was in the gambling business, they'd use that a little bit. We kept at it, and then they had the election and we beat him hands down. We just put in all of our people and turned the club around. And since then, it's been good. People'll be in for a president one year, two years; then they have another one, another, another, so it was a good thing. But anyway, we went all over the country. What direction now?

How did you decide to go public with the Collection and to open it up, to make a museum of it?

Oh, I see, yeah. Well, that was—you have the two cars, then the tour cars, and all I can tell you the cars as they came, but—real fast. And as my money came in, I was makin' money, so I could afford to buy a car here and there. And I bought a Duesenberg, and I bought this and that. I lived on South Virginia then, and I remember I had a backyard there and I think I had at one time eight or ten cars out there. And they worried me. Then I moved, and I had to move them. So then I started renting vacant buildings around. And pretty soon there were twenty and then fifty, and—"Oh, there's a car I want," and I had the money; I'd buy it. And what are you gonna

do with them? And, you know, eventually you take a look, and well, what can I—you know—what are you gonna do with a hundred cars? But you can get there real fast when you have the money and the interest. So I thought, "Well, gee, I should have a museum; I should have 'em in a building." So I had some of 'em in a building, and then as I met other people—you know, by then I knew a lot of collectors. And they'd come to Reno—"Oh, I want to see your cars—"

"Oh, tine." So then I'd take 'em, and I'd have a whole bunch of keys in my pocket and we'd go here, and here's eight; and then we'd drive over here, and here'd be twelve; and then we go over here, and here's four more—and drive all over Reno to do that. And then I thought, "Gee, they should all be in one place." So by then we had some on Lake Street over here—maybe thirty or so—and that wasn't room. So then I thought, gee, I had maybe a hundred by then. And then the place in Sparks was vacant.

Oh, I had 'em up on the hill up here for a while—that old building up there. What's that—you go up beyond the college? It was built as a storage building. It's real—it's a two-story thing, and we since sold it. But that was there, and I forget the name of the street up there. But you go right by the University, right at the top of the hill, and turn right and go a block, and turn left. And it was made out of old railroad ties—very well-built building. And it became available. I rented it for a while, and then I bought it. But it had two floors. So then I started puttin' the cars in there. And by then, we did want to show them, so then we looked around and found the old ice warehouse in Sparks; nobody was usin' it for anything. And that fit our thing pretty good, and Dermody had it, and the rent was quite reasonable.

So we moved in out there, and we kept the building on the hill for our junkers and

our parts, and just disposed of it a few years ago. And moved out to Sparks, and that was— I remember we signed a year lease 'cause that's all the time I was goin' to stay there. I think we've been there fifteen years or so. But Dermody's a good guy. We always just— another year, and he doesn't raise the rent any, although he gets paid pretty good. But then he's built more buildings for us, and more buildings and more buildings and more buildings, on and on and on and on and on.

Would you like to trace the evolution of that into having a whole crew and a library for research and a really distinguished kind of collection?

Well, the library goes hand in hand with it. As you want to restore a car—and most of 'em, I'd say ninety-five percent of the cars you get have been altered in one way or the other, and I've altered many myself, so I can't criticize. But you want to restore it to the way it was when it was new. And I collected literature just because I liked the literature; it's fun to read about 'em. So whenever I could buy an old catalog, I bought it, even before I think I had the Maxwell. And then when we got into it in the cars and literature became available, I bought it, and I bought it real heavy whenever—'cause I knew there was only so much of an original literature. So fortunately, I really went out on it. So now I would say we have possibly the second best automotive library in the world that I know of. There may be others, but I mean overall—of course, primarily American. But there is one, the Detroit, which quite properly, that's a good one. Unfortunately, they haven't done much with theirs. They just accumulated the stuff over the years, and it's just piled up, where over the years, because of our use and interests and being able to afford it, we've cataloged it

and just kept goin' and goin' and. Goin' and goin', and we're always updating and updating. It we have the material on a car, like we can do it on the phone—I'll discover a car that I never heard of, and I can call the library on the phone and get the right guy and say, "Give me what you have on a so-and-so, so-and-so."

And within a minute, he'll be—"Well, it's a such-and-such and the bore and stroke and the wheel base—" and da da da da da da.

So our library—for years before we got into it—in fact, I had one lady out there cataloging for about ten years. She finally died. She did it all by hand, but she did a super job. She was one of those people that worked fast, and you didn't have to watch her; she'd give you your full eight hours. And she did it, and. I don't think I ever found a mistake that she'd made in all that—. And her work is still there; you can find her handwriting and all. It was so wonderful then to—'cause for years, you think [clicks fingers], "Gee, I remember I've read that," and you get this and you go through it. And that one you'd go through it, and "Where did I see that article on the 1914 American Underslung?" You know, I'd look and look and spend hours, which, of course, you know as much about that as I do. But now we're in such wonderful shape, and we're getting even more sophisticated all the time. I don't go up there much any more cause I just say, "Hey, I want somethin' on a so-and-so," and I get it right away. But then occasionally I do go up, and I'm amazed at how things have been changin' around. They're just realty movin'. And they're talkin' about goin' into microfilming all that now.

Well, they're talkin' about microfilming the catalogs. And I said, "Well, how does that make sense? You got the original catalog—what can be better than that?" And the big thing is the speed. They say with a microfilm, you want this, you look it up, and here it is—

the 1908 so-and-so on page 73. But by doing this [gesture] with the microfilm, there it is right in front of you without gettin' the catalog and all this. It's just, you know—just like that, so—I don't know, maybe it's good. I'd love to have the original catalog.

Oh, that library and the restoration—that was just trial and error thing. We started, we had one mechanic, and then we got an upholsterer, and we got a painter, and we got another mechanic and a body man and a—and there's so many—you need machinists and so on. And they just grew—it was no plan on Lt—by trial and error.

Then we've been limited on our budget. We can only spend so much money there. But we've never had as many as we'd like to have. But it's been, I'd say, fair. I would have liked to have maybe double what we've had in mechanics and in painters and woodworkers, but you can only do so much. But it's selective, and we find many of 'em—I'd say today maybe we have, oh, maybe seventy people actually work on the car—I think there's a crew of a hundred and fifty out there, but there's janitors and there's guides and librarians and so on, and secretaries and guards.

So say, maybe seventy-five actually work on the cars. But of the seventy-five, I'd say, one time sixty-five of 'em were antique car buffs, and today, I'd say maybe thirty or forty are—maybe don't have any but like the old cars and would rather work on a 1911 Pope-Hartford than the 1977 Cadillac. Just they like that car, they like that kind of work. Also the beauty of that kind of work is, like as a mechanic, we put one man on a car—or he may have two cars—and he'll be the chief mechanic. And he will tear the car down, and when he needs any help to lift, why, there'll be somebody to help him. But then the way we're set up makes it so nice against a person doin' it all himself, because like he'll get down to the frame and

he wants it sandblasted, which is, you know, an old rusty frame, so you just send it out there, and we have a man does sandblasting. And so that comes back, and then maybe it needs a little welding; well, he may do that welding. And then the engine work—he'll probably do the engine, but when it gets to machining a part, why, we have machinists there. And when it gets to the assembly, he will assemble; painting, we have a painting department. And the wheels are probably broken or—usually the wooden wheels are bad, and we have a wood department; they make wheels. We can even make bodies if necessary. And then upholstery, we do that. So he just will be the head fella; but he'll get it up to here, then it goes to the upholstery, then it goes to painting and all. And then he road tests it and so on, and eventually, then I drive it, and if it's okay, why, in it goes to museum, and he'll start on another one. Usually he'll have two so that, you get held up even with an arrangement like that, you're waiting for the so-and-so, so then he can be working on this car here, so he isn't at a loss what to do. So that works pretty good. And then it's happy day when the car's driven and accepted, and he goes on to somethin' else and does it all over again.

You get to have a lot of fun with them, too.

Yeah. And then I get to pick which ones we're gonna restore. And I change my mind all the time, 'cause I like that one, then there's this one we just got. My previous manager, a Ray Jesch, who is going to Australia with Bud Catlett—. We're good friends. But he was the manager one time, and so I was walkin' through one of their shops, and I saw this car; and it'd been sittin' there for, oh, six or eight years. And "Ray!" I said, "That car has been—" (I could remember the date—maybe five—).

I said, "That's been sittin' there for five years! When the hell are we gonna get it finished?"

And he said, "Well, when I took this job," he said, "that car was third in line." (And I thought, well, we've done ten cars since then.)

I said, "Well, why—?"

He said, "You've put twenty-five cars in front of it."

And I said, "What do you mean?" And he was ready for me and either had it in his pocket, or he went to his office and got it and had the very latest restoration list, which I had prepared (or had been prepared under my direction). And here was maybe twenty-seven cars, and this one I'm yellin' about was Number Twenty-Seven, which is where I'd put it because of these other twenty-five. I didn't put the twenty-five, though, but a new car would come in or a new old car, and I'd say, "Oh God, let's do that one, Ray!"

And he said, "Well, where do you want it?"

I said, "Put it in front of everything!" So, I had to laugh; I really did! I said, "Oh boy, oh boy!" [Laughs] But he was ready; I guess over the years it'd be, "What the hell, it that's the way he wants to do it, let him do it," So—.

Anyway, as we're getting ready now for our move to I-80, our new—. Worked on the plans, and it looks like within about two years we'll be in business out there. So now we're really hoppin' up out here [HAC]. Like yesterday, I spent the whole day going through the warehouses with our present-day buyer and picking cars that we want to restore. So many of 'em are unrestored, and we can do a class one restoration, which takes a year; you tear 'em completely apart. Then other cars that you're not really gonna drive anyway, we can do what we call a "cosmetic." You can do that in a couple of months. And that is paint and upholstery—straighten the metal, paint it and upholster it and put new tires on it and new

plating; so it looked like a fully restored car. And it'll run, but not very good, but then we won't drive it anyway. But in the museum it'll be fine, and then that, say, we can do four to one. So we can do an awful lot of those now.

But we were going through and lookin' to see which ones actually—and some you can display; like there's a Rainier out there that we got from—it's the same as the beer—it's the make [of] the car, and it's a limousine or a town car, and it's a 1907 convertible limousine. That's one of the Rockefeller cars we got a year or so ago. But it's totally original. It's a 1907 car, and it's never been restored, and it's beautiful the way it is. The paint is old and faded and the brass is tarnished, but it's just a beautiful thing.

And that car we'll never touch. The tires are totally shot, so we'll get a set of tires to put on it and just put in the museum; that's the way it is. And you know, it's more beautiful than a restored one 'cause it just has aged gracefully.

We have quite a few of those, fortunately. They add a lot. Then when a car is pretty bad, why, then we restore it and it looks like a brand-new whatever it is. That's really fun; I enjoy doin' that. And every car, when it's complete, I really feel like I'd done something, although I really didn't. I mean, you know, if wasn't for me, it wouldn't've been done, but still they did it. I just feel so good when it's done and I drive it. And they have to do the advertised speed, which is difficult to find out, but you can, pretty well, And like a Chrysler—Chrysler was great on speed. Their Chrysler 70 was supposed to go seventy, and their Chrysler 60 went sixty, and their Chrysler 80 went eighty. And they had a 72, and 72 and a 62, and so on. And they were pretty accurate—Chrysler was pretty good on it. So we take 'em out, and then we allow for the altitude against sea level, and they'll do it.

Surprising. Of course, with the speed limits we have today, a lot of those old cars are right up there.

Where do you drive them when you go for your test drive; where do you go?

Oh, it's real easy. The place in Sparks, where we're right off of the freeway there, you know, so we just zip right onto that and go east as far as we want to go and turn—I usually go to the first overpass (you know where that is) 'cause by then I can get up to top speed and get all the feel of the thing and then zip around. Also it's nice if you're going over the speed limit, which many of 'em'll do, you can get up there, but you're back down and off and over by the time anybody gets to look at you. [Laughs] 'course most policemen are pretty good; you know people knock 'em and all, and I hate 'em with their radar—I really do, I hate 'em. But still they're pretty good guys, and if you have an old car, it's a different thing. Then they're a friend, you know. If you're in a Ferrari, they're an enemy. But if you're in a Pope-Hartford, why, they're way—and they'll help you along and stop other traffic and, “Come on,” you know; they're a buddy then. They're human. They have a lousy job.

So they really are road tested in every sense of the word.

Oh yeah, yeah, they have to, uh-huh. You have to get down to the nitty gritty, 'cause so many—like today, you know, they would advertise, oh, the ninety-mile-an-hour so-and-so, and no way would it go ninety miles an hour. And they would just, you know, talk, so we'd have to sit through that. Usually you can tell by the specifications of what other cars'll do—just about what it'll do.

I know my father had a secretary one time, a male secretary that was super. I can't remember his name; I'll think of it. But he was like my Bob Hudgens; he just did everything and did it real good. So we got to be friends 'cause many times my father'd be somewhere and I'd be with his man doing something. You know, I was a teenager.

So I remember he told me a story one time about a Whippet; it was an Overland Whippet. That was a cute little car; we have several in the museum. And they were advertised at (this is in '27, '28)—the Whippet would go fifty-five miles an hour, which is pretty fast for that car. And he was a dealer at the time he told me this story, and they wouldn't go fifty-five. So they'd do about fifty or forty-eight, which was pretty good considering the design of the car. But he said he'd sell these cars, and people, oh, they're so happy, and they go out and they come back the next day or the same day and say, “This damn thing won't go fifty-five; it'll only go—.”

So being an honest person (which he really was), he'd work it over and he'd tune this and tune that, and it still wouldn't go fifty-five. And then he'd take the head off and grind the valves and just really spend a lot of time and money tryin' to make that damn thing go fifty-five. You know, after all this trial and error, maybe he'd sold eight or ten (I don't know how many), and they're comin' back at him, and it's in this little town, and he's not the good guy any more; he's the guy that's sellin' these bum cars that won't do—. So, “My Cod, what am I gonna do?” And all of a sudden in the middle of the night—like ideas will come to you and [slaps forehead], “Oh!”

So he went down the next day, and in those days the speedometer was operated by a little spring inside that would turn and the lever would go up, but the stiffness of the spring had a lot to do with how fast it would

go up. Comin' from the factory, they were pretty accurate. So all he did on these when they'd come in, he'd say, "Okay, I'll fix your car. Come back tomorrow." So when the guy was gone and nobody was lookin', he'd take the speedometer and just bend the spring a little bit so the [laughing] speedometer would read sixty. So then the man'd come back and get his car and take it out—"Oh wow, it'll go sixty!" [Laughing]

He said, "All those hours I spent tryin' to fix 'em, and all I had to do is bend the spring!" Huh! Which is, you know, advertising, or human nature, or merchandizing or whatever you want to call it; it's what's in the customer's mind that's what matters.

THE PONY EXPRESS MUSEUM

So then I was into this old car collecting, and my wife of the time, Scherry, was into old clothes, antique clothes, I should say [chuckles]. So we were in Hollywood or L.A. for some reason. I remember she had a new Cadillac I'd bought her that I was real proud of, and we'd driven that down; and we were there for the Rose Bowl game or something like that. And she saw a picture in the paper of Parker Lyon with an old costume, and, the picture said, "Parker Lyon—Noted Movie Man," so on. Says, had donated "this hat" or "this costume" to some benefit. And they were gonna have a benefit—the lady so-and-so was havin' a benefit, and this was one of the things that would be auctioned off. So Scherry wanted to go to that 'cause she was really collecting costumes real strong at the time. She went into it very strong, did a good job— you know, the period of the car—1910, 1905, that sort of thing. And she got a lot of 'em. But anyway, she saw this, and she wanted to go.

So I was busy somehow with somethin'—I don't know what I—oh, I guess that's when I

was on the board of directors of the Horseless Carriage Club. We would go down once a month— that was it—to a meeting. So I was down there for the meeting, and the sale was the next day. It was the same time as the meeting, and it was in Pasadena, I believe. So she didn't know her way around, so I think she took a cab to Pasadena while I went to the meeting.

The sale didn't amount to anything. But Parker was there, and he's a good friend today. But he was quite a lady's man or fancied himself to be a lady's man. At that time he was over the hill, but—[laughs]. But anyway—and Scherry was really a striking-lookin' gal. So she walked in and wanted to see this whatever-it-was, and he really thought she was all right. So he was super nice to her. So he told her that this was just one of the things out of his museum in Arcadia, and she should see that—he'd like to show it to her and all. She was no dummy, but I guess she got the hat or whatever it was and came back. [She was] quite excited; she said, "Well, he has this museum out there just full of stuff," called the Pony Express Museum. And he'd invited her out to see it, da da da.

And so I said, "Well, let's—we can do that." So we went out and looked at the museum, and there weren't too many clothes in it, but there was everything, just—. See, his father, Parker Lyon, Sr., who founded Fresno, I think it is, and also the Lyon [Van Lines] moving company, had collected all this stuff in the old, old days. And he just went to these little mining towns in the '30s and would go in, and he'd buy the whole town for a hundred dollars, and the price— well, I have all that information—what he paid for things.

But anyway, here was this huge—and they had no cars, but everything else, which was really things I needed, but—. Parker, I got acquainted with him, and we got to be

pretty good friends, talkin'. [Then] he, either at the time or soon after—approached me about buyin' the thing—the whole thing—and which was, as I said, no cars, but there was everything else. And in the car collecting, all we'd gotten was cars and motorcycles and things; and many times we'd thought— and people'd say, "Well, what are you gonna have? A bunch of cars?"

"Yeah."

"Well, aren't you gonna have anything else?"

Then I'd say, "Oh yeah, we'll have other things 'cause everybody isn't a car nut. But that's down the road, and we'll get some—."

"Well, what are you gonna have?"

"Well, maybe Pony Express," maybe this and that.

So anyway, Lyon approached me, and he wanted to sell. And I thought, "Oh brother! If I could get this, then it would just—" I didn't want to spend my time collecting placer mining stuff and that sort of thing 'cause it wasn't—I wanted to collect cars. So here it was all done for me.

So, "Oh, wow. Lets s talk about So I think we got onto it. And Parker was a heavy drinker, but he didn't drink all the time. 'cause it just made it a little more difficult to deal with him, but it was no big deal. But anyway, he wanted to sell the museum. And the meantime, before I got to talkin' head-and-head, I had it appraised; and I thought it was pretty smart of me. Maybe it was sneaky, but it was—I'm kinda proud of it. I had no idea what it was worth, and I wanted to—you know, how are you gonna talk if you don't know what it's worth?

So I found a couple (forget how I found 'em) of antique collectors; I think they had a little shop out in that area. And I forget how I got into them—a man, wife, and forty-ish, and they really knew their stuff. So we thought

up this idea; Parker was real (I know) real [insistent]—do-you-want-to-buy-it-or-don't-you kind of a guy [gesture, rigid, excited]. Oh, I didn't want to talk till I had an idea, so I had this couple go in and appraise it; and they acted like antique nuts. They went and visited every day and appraised the thing, which if you can imagine—'cause they couldn't have their pencil and papers out to—. But they actually appraised the whole thing by acting as just enthusiasts. They went there every day for a week and just—. They pretended they were from New York or something, so they had to see it while they were there and they only had a week. We had a real good story cooked up.

Parker wasn't around much, fortunately, and then he had a manager there who I got well acquainted with; in fact, he went to work for me later. And the manager was a real nice little guy. He was tryin' real hard to make it go, and it wasn't goin' too good. So here he had this couple from New York that came in every day and bought their tickets and everything, and the best customers he'd ever had, so—[laughs]. He'd tell 'em anything they wanted to know, and he'd follow 'em around. Then somehow they wrote it—gee!—did it, but they did and they appraised the thing. I have their appraisal today, and it was done, and it was very accurate, 'cause I think it was questioned and it was accurate.

So anyway, it came out, I think around three hundred [thousand dollars] or something. And I think Parker wanted—then we got out; I knew where I was. And of course, I didn't want to pay three hundred; I wanted to pay a hundred or something. And Parker, I think, wanted five hundred or—so we were way apart. So we got to talking. The three hundred, let me get it straight, is really the retail price of the thing; so wholesale, of course, it should be less than three hundred. So I think maybe wholesale it was maybe a

hundred and fifty thousand, and I was willing to pay that.

But Parker and I got to talkin'. I don't know if he'd been drinkin' or not, but we talked; and we were kinda friends. And four hundred, three hundred, da da da da da. And so finally—"Make me an offer.

So I said, "Okay. A hundred and fifty thousand."

But then I think he had a couple of drinks 'cause he was a different guy. He got really insulted. [Gruff voice] "Ha! That's ridiculous, that's an insult! I'll burn it before I'll sell it for that!" da da da da da. And he just— you know. So what do you do?

Well, long before this I discovered—and which is the key to the thing—that he'd been wantin' to sell it, sell it. So I said, "Why in the hell does he want to—he's had it for fifteen years out there. And he isn't doing any worse now than he was." It was right across from the Santa Anita race track. So that was a good location (of course, the horseplayers couldn't care less, but—)Anyway, the story was that it's a wonderful motel location for people—horse track followers— 'cause there was none real close, and this is maybe twenty or thirty acres, right there. So someone had come along and offered Parker a big chunk of money (or at least he thought it was) for this land. So he'd sold it, and he'd been given a year to get off. Well, he was not payin' attention, so by the time I got in the scene, he had about three or four months to go. And October first, he had to have that off of there; he was liable for all sorts of things. So this is maybe August and September, this is goin' about, or maybe July and August. So then when he got highly insulted, why, I—you know—I said, "Well, time's gonna—he's gonna have to." But then I got nervous. I thought, "Oh my God, suppose," you know, "suppose he finds some—." And I wanted it real bad by then;

oh boy, did I want it! Although not enough to pay any more than a hundred and fifty.

So Parker had a wife (I think her name was Gladys. She's since died of cancer). But she was, I'll say about the classiest lady I ever met, outside of my family and my wife— just absolutely—. She was very good looking, very—she was a Pasadena socialite—as social as you can get. But she was head-and-head; she could talk to you just like—you know— never put you down. She was a gracious and extremely—and she was no kid. She was in her fifties or sixties, but her figure was excellent, and her clothes were perfect but not— why, just perfect, and her hair was always so [gestures to head], and her manner just—the nicest ladies I ever knew. And I really liked her; Scherry and I both just loved her. And she had this drunken husband, and he was, he was drinkin' way too much. And he wasn't payin' attention to his business, and he was a chaser—had been all his life. And they had several children. But she knew what she had, and she'd thought, "Well, this is my life," and she just did the best she could, didn't complain, just was a—. I admired her so much; you know, she could've walked out, but she thought, well, da da da.

She was right in on the negotiations and all, and—. But then finally [it] was Parker and I, and so he was highly insulted. So anyway, so I'm sittin' there and I thought, "Gee, I'd love to have that. How can I get it?" And I thought, and I thought.

So I got this phone call, and it was either at my office or at home. And it was Gladys Parker. "Hi, Bill—" (and we were on a Bill-Gladys, you know). "Hi, Bill. How are you?"

"Oh," I said, "Gladys, gee whiz, Scherry and I have thought about you so much. Sure miss seeing you. And," you know, "how's everything?"

She said, "Well, really not too good, Bill." She said, "You know the story. We have another six weeks to get off of here. And Parker don't know what the hell to—really don't know what direction to go in. And you can't move the thing; it costs as much to move it as it's worth. And he's just about desperate!" And she said, "I think he'd gladly take your offer." But she said, "He's too damn proud to call you." She said, "I've asked him a dozen times to call you," and she says, "He'd say, 'No way will I call that cheap bastard!'" And she said, "I'm sure if you'll call Parker, everything will just go zing." She says, "I know it's his place, it's his thing, he should call you, without any doubt. But," she says, "he's stubborn; he won't do it, and if you will do that," she said, "I'm sure we've got a deal."

And I said, "Wow!" I said, "I don't mind," you know. Anyway, I thought about it—so I didn't call right then; I waited a day or somethin'. Then I called. And so I said, "Parker Lyon."

So he came to the phone. "Hello."

I said, "Hi, Parker. This is Bill Harrah."

And he said, "Bill! Gee, it's nice to hear from you! I was just gonna call you!" da da da da da [laughs].

So we made the deal, and it took I think—. Scherry did a super job 'cause I was—you know, I had a place to run here. And we shipped it up on fourteen freight cars, I think it was— railroad freight cars.

Parker was in the moving business; he wanted to move it, which we let him do. We could've got—but you know, to be polite, we did. But we didn't really trust him too much—not that he'd steal anything, but he'd go get drunk. And so we wanted to be sure we got everything, plus that it was packed well. So Scherry went down—and I was here, and she was down there, I remember, for two or three weeks. I'd go down on weekends or

whenever I could. And she worked—and loved it— fourteen, sixteen hours a day; and she was right in there with the packers and helping them, but also to see that everything was packed good. And the packers were pros, but still it didn't hurt to have someone there that—you know, to watch it. So things were just packed perfectly and then shipped up in the—I think there were several freight cars. We have I think a tenth of it on display at HAG, and we have nine-tenths still in storage, some of which we'll never use, but there's just—I don't think you could name a thing in 1860 to 1900 that—wash basins and (what do they call 'em?)—thunder mugs—what's another word for that? Chamber pots.

And this Parker Lyon, Sr.—he was kind of a dirty old guy, I guess. And he had this chanter pot collection. And we still say we have the greatest chanter pot collection in the world. And he got a big kick out of that, and his wife just hated it, apparently. It bugged her that he was collecting these chamber pots, so he would. Oh, I think there's a hundred or so in the collection, and they're all different, you know, some of 'em real fancy.

Anyway, we got it here, and then the main idea as I explained is—which we will use, you know; we're on our—definitely working hard on our plans for the 1-80 now, which we call it. And part of that will be the—. We've thought a little about it and some of the—. See, we've had the display out there for several years now. And we'll enlarge that, and it is great for the kids and all to go in and see. Actually part of it was Buffalo Bill's saddle, and there's some real high spots like that.

To add a postscript to that, when we had some of our car auctions, we also sold some of Pony Express things and all duplicates. See, like Parker Lyon, Sr., he'd go in and he'd buy the whole town, as I said, or so instead of two so-and-sos, there'd be sixty of 'em. And we,

I'd say, they wanted to sell some; and I'd say, "Well, I don't want to miss a bet," so I got all the guys that knew anything. Okay—or once in a while— well, we never sold a chamber pot 'cause that's kinda cute. But like a certain kind of a lamp, and maybe there's forty-eight of 'em. "Well, what's the most?"

"Well, we might use a dozen of them at the very most in a saloon or somethin', if we build one." Okay, then we had thirty-two excess, so we would sell them. And we have since sold enough to pay for what we paid for it. And we still have— I said we have nine-tenths of it; we've sold some, but I'd say we have more than half of what we originally bought.

And the funny thing about it was I invited Parker and Gladys up, because we sent Christmas cards and kept in touch, and I knew their kids and—. So I invited them up to the sale. And they came. You know, I put 'em up at the hotel, and this and that, and very friendly, and—. They came to every sale. And he had his catalog, and he'd keep track of everything. And then afterwards—and I thought, "Oh brother, he's gonna see—" you know—'cause he knew what we were sellin' it for, and it was ten times what we paid for it.

And he was enjoying it just as much—'course, he was on the wagon then; he was a different man. But he was enjoying it as much as we were. He said, "Bill, you got seventeen hundred dollars for that damn thing!" And he said, "My father paid four dollars for it!" you know. "Ha-ha-ha-ha!" It was just like he was gettin' the money, just—real super guy. Then she got cancer and died. He's still around, but—one of those stories.

BUILDING A COLLECTION

You've mentioned your contacts with other collectors. Who are some of the collectors that

have influenced you, and then you end up buying their collections?

Oh, like there was Doc Shafer. He lived in San Bernardino. He started in the—gosh knows when. He had this place he lived—he was an old bachelor. He was a dentist and an old bachelor, and you'd go out to his house, and he had several acres there, and it was just full of old cars, and everything else. He was the kind of person that you've probably met that never ever threw anything away. And he collected the cars, plus—but you'd walk through his yard, and there'd be an old tire, and there'd be an old coffee pot, and there'd be an old—. And it was all there; and he never threw anything away. Over the years he got to likin' me, and I was always fair in my price. When he'd want to sell a car, why, he knew he could get his price. So I kept buying more and more from him. So then he came a time and he was all crippled up. And he wanted to sell 'em all but two. He was going to keep two cars to go on trips. And so, "Bill are you interested?"

"Yeah, I'm interested, Doc.

So I went down and I looked at all the cars. I had a list of 'em, and we arrived at a price just in a matter of minutes— there was no problem there at all, 'cause he knew what they were worth and I knew what they were worth. But there were two cars that weren't there that I knew. And they weren't special cars, but they were cars. So I said, "Hey, where's the so-and-so and so-and-so?"

He said, "Oh, I loaned that to my—" (it was his cousin or something), and he'd loaned one to somebody else, on a year thing. They wanted to borrow a car, and he said, "Well, take it for a year and give it back." And they'd had it for several years.

And I said, "Well, when you gonna get it back?"

And he said, "Oh, I'll get it back. Don't worry about it."

And I said, "Well, are they part of the deal?"

He said, "Yes, they're part of the deal."

"Okay," I said, "Well, how do I get 'em?"

And he said, "Well, I'll get 'em back for you." And he said, "If I don't, it'll be in my will that those cars are to go to you."

So I said, "Okay, Doc." And Catlett and I are talkin' on the deal: well, that's fine, it's a good deal even if we don't get those cars, but no way are we gonna—you know—'cause the people that had 'em really felt they'd owned 'em. You know how it is when you have a car that long, or any borrow, you know. A person borrows somethin', pretty soon they resent you askin' for it. So it was that kind of a situation.

So anyway, Doc Shafer died finally, and in his will he said, da da da da da da da da da da da, "and the 1915 Dodge, and the 19(so-so) car are to go to the Harrah Collection in Reno, Nevada"—zing, zing, zing, which surprised the heck out of Bud and I 'cause the old guy was kind of a phony in many ways. We thought, "Hell, he's just sayin' that. He isn't gonna do it." But he did it! And he had, and it was written—it wasn't added to the will; it was a new will, and that was put in the will. So we thought, "Gee, that was really nice of him."

Those were all antiques, see. Doc was all antiques, which as 15 and earlier, or generally that period. And the Classic cars—those are the big cars—and the Classic Car Club, which is the leading club in that, defines a Classic as any high quality car made between the years of 1925 and 1942. And that's your Duesenbergs and Packards and things. And they spell it right out in their bylaws. They name the cars, like Franklin is a Classic, all but certain models; Buicks aren't Classics because

they're cheaper, they're run-of-the-mill; where Cadillacs—most Cadillacs are Classics. Duesenbergs are Classics, most Packards are Classics, most Lincolns are Classics, so on, so on. So I was real weak in Classics (I had maybe a few, but I was still in the antiques), although I liked the Classics. But I just hadn't got around to them yet. And this friend of mine, Jack Nethercutt in Los Angeles, was a collector, and we became friends. I'd heard of him before I met him. And I remember he had a DuPont being upholstered out at an upholsterer in Pasadena that worked for me. And I looked at this DuPont, and it was just beautiful; and so much of the parts had been missing, and they'd been reproduced, and it was done so well. And I said, "Whose car is this?"

Said, "Well, that's Nethercutt's car." And then I heard—and I kept hearin' about Nethercutt, Nethercutt, Nethercutt, Nethercutt—the new guy in old cars, and it was mostly Classics. And so finally I met him, and—a very interesting fella; we're good friends. And he was a big part of Merle Norman Cosmetics. Fact, I think he was adopted by Merle Norman as a child. Well, he got into these Classics, and he had some wonderful stuff. And I'd seen his cars, and he had Duesenbergs and Lincolns and Stutz; and you name it, he had it—just wonderful!

Well, anyway, he called me up one time at Lake Tahoe, and he's the kind of person that—a call from Jack Nethercutt, by then we're pretty good friends. So it was "Phone—Jack Ne—"

"Oh, hi, Jack." But I was up at the Lake, and I thought, why is he callin'?

He said, "Oh, hi, Bill. Glad I could catch you." He said, "Would you be interested in my whole car collection? Would you be interested in buying it?"

And I said, "Well, gee, of course, but I—what's it all about? Tell me!"

And he said, "Well, I've got problems in my company." He said it's managerial—what do you call it?—almost a proxy thing, he said, "There's problems here." He said, "I got to get rid of those cars fast, and I need some money bad."

And I said, "Well, what kind of money are you talkin' about?"

And he said, "How's a hundred and fifty thousand dollars?" And that's for thirty Duesenbergs and things—which is a real easy five thousand apiece, and they were worth ten apiece at the time, or more.

I said, "A hundred and fifty thousand!"

He said, "It has to be cash, and I have to have it tomorrow or no later than day after tomorrow."

And I said, "Why did you call me?"

And he said—he laughed—he said, "Well, you're the only guy I know of that I hope can come up with a hundred and fifty thousand dollars in two days.

And of course, my car budget was always—it's always out of kilter. But, you know, I was the boss, so I thought, "Well, i—" so, "Well, I'll call you back in ten minutes." So I got old Andy Iratcabal who was our money man then, and I said, "Andy, I know we're stretched" ('cause we're always stretched— or we were then; we're not any more) - I said, "I know we're stretched, but," I said, "I got a chance to buy three to five hundred thousand dollars worth of cars for a hundred and fifty thousand dollars tomorrow. Can we do it?"

And Andy was the kind of guy that didn't automatically say No. He said, "Well, let me see." And you know, you can always borrow from this bankroll and all the little tricks. So he called me back—I'm at the Lake—and Andy called me back in five minutes. He said, "We can do it."

So I called Jack back in five minutes and said, "I can do it."

And he said, "Well, how are we gonna work out the details?"

And I said, "Well, I think the best thing we can do is," I said, "is for me to come down there today." And I abandoned everything and got in my Ferrari and drove to L.A. I remember it was snowin', and the roads were slippery, which it didn't bother me, and I made it in seven hours or something. And Jack and I sat down and made the deal. And of course, I have every one of those cars, and they're on display, and I'll show em to you sometime. Just super! Every car's an exciting, wonderful car. So why? Why, why, why, why?

So one time—it's happened many times since—I was somewhere, and Jack and I were real close friends then. We didn't fall out; we just kinda went different ways. So we didn't see much of each other. Whenever we'd see each other—"oh, hi! How are ya, buddy?"

Jack has a new place in L.A., or comparatively new, where he has his cars (he has a whole 'nother collection now) . And he built this building to put 'em in, and the building cost ten million or so, just for the cars. But anyway, I think he was showing me through there, and there was—oh, there was another person with us, a third party that knew me and knew Jack but didn't—and so I told the little story about the cars.

And Jack turned to me and he said, "Bill," he said, "I told you over and over—" (which he had—I left that out: that that hundred and fifty thousand dollars enabled him to get control of the company and buy out, get rid of all problems, so I think he's a sole owner now or ninety percent, or whatever) So he said, "That a hundred and fifty thousand was worth ten to fifty million dollars!" So he said, "Don't ever say that cause it's not true.

Well, he's on the board of directors of a museum in Cleveland that I'm on, and in fact we were there over the weekend. It was

his first meeting. I've been on the board for a year. And everybody's meeting Jack and we're visiting. So I started to tell that story again, and he laughed and he said, "Bill! That hundred and fifty thousand was worth fifty million dollars, so just don't say that!" He said, "I turned around and I built that building, I have an equivalent—" (and he has exactly every car he sold me, he got another one and redid it) And he said, "I've got the cars, I've got the building, I've got the company." He said, "Just don't say that." But it was one of those miracles. Anyway, that put me into the Classics real big overnight.

So then as I got into Classics, I got more interested in them; and then, of course, I've always been not influenced— you know, I'm my own decision maker where cars are concerned. I like many cars; like Jack Nethercutt wouldn't think of owning a Model T Ford—just it's, you know, not below him, but it's just not his. And we have every Ford ever built, and we have Chevrolets, and we have Stars, and we have Maxwells and—. 'course, fortunately, I like all automobiles, so I can see something good in a Duesenberg or a Star or a Chevrolet or a Stutz; each one is—. And again, that's why our collection is so broad.

But also we have to look at it business-wise. You know, it just can't all be fun 'cause there's so much money involved, and we are a public company. It has to make some sense, and it will; it'll be a tremendous attraction as a car museum. It has to be the most interesting in the world because of the size, plus we have something for everybody. And if you like Fords, we got 'em; if you like Chevies, we got 'em; if you like Stutzes, we have 'em; or, you know, Franklins, Pierce Arrow.

How about some of these other collectors, like Melton, the singer, and the Rockefellers—.

Melton and I were good friends. I bought, well, most of his cars when he died. Well, I bought before he died about everything that was any good. It was a tragic thing, because he'd been such a big star and made so much money, and all of a sudden he was no longer a big star, but he kept his living on the high plane. And he got broke; when I met him, he was broke. He tried to maintain this front, and there're some pitiful stories there. I think I bought twelve cars from Melton. Then what I didn't buy because his prices were a little high for what he had left, [Winthrop] Rockefeller—. See, he wanted to start that museum there, which he did, and then he bought the rest of Melton's stuff. Then when Rockefeller died, we bought that collection, which was a super collection, and backhandedly we got the Melton stuff sooner or later. Melton was a sad story, just so sad.

To tell a story on him, we'd been flirtin' with buyin' some cars, and his prices were pretty high. And he was pretty cocky—he was a very cocky person. But then he got to hurtin', and he called me one time from Hollywood—said, "Bill," (he'd come over the phone just like he was walkin' in the room—real booming)—"Bill! I think I'm interested in some of your offers. Can we talk about it?"

And I said, "Wow, yeah! Where are you?"

"Oh, I'm in Hollywood."

And I said, "Come on up."

He said, "No, no, I've got a bunch of things goin' down here; I can't get away. Can you come down and see me?"

And I said, "Well, if you can't, sure." But I was kinda busy. I kinda pushed him.

He said, "No, it's impossible." He said, "I've got a whole lot of—on Universal," da da da, "I'm busy, busy, busy. You come down here."

I said, "Okay."

He said, "I'll meet you at the Brown Derby for lunch, the Hollywood Brown Derby."

I said, "Okay, at one o'clock."
"Fine."

So I got there and he met me, and he looked kinda seedy. You can tell 'cause he was a real fop, you know—I mean show business. But actually his cuffs were frayed, that sort of thing. At a glance, he looked real nice, but you could see that he just was—. I thought, "This is weird," and I thought, "Well, so what? Maybe he had to catch the plane in a hurry." I didn't, you know—it didn't really enter my mind. So we went in and we had a real nice lunch. And we got finished—well, I was his guest. And they brought the check, and he kinda changed the subject or something, which wasn't his way at all. So I just paid the check, and I didn't think—I just thought, "Well, why not?"—you know, "We're friends." Didn't bother me at all.

And then once I paid, he said, "Oh, you shouldn't've done that!"

And I said, "Oh, Jimmy, it's okay, you know—we're buddies."

And he said, "Well, all right, but I'll get dinner—" whatever.

So then as we started out the door, we just—we're in the restaurant and we're starting out, and here's where the entrance is and the maitre d'. And he said, "Oh, Bill, Bill!" And he stopped me, and, he said, "You know? I left my money in my other pants." He said, "Could you let me have ten dollars?"

And I said, "Well, of course." I gave him ten dollars.

So we walked out, and as we walked out, he—the maitre d'— and he made a big show. The maitre d' said, "Oh, thank you Mr. Melton."

And Jimmy said, "Don't forget Jimmy!" you know. And then he hid this ten in his hand and he said, "Here you are, my man," you know, handed him the ten, and of f we went.

But, oh, I didn't say anything, but I thought—man, things were startin' to add up, you know. And come to find out, the reason he didn't come to Reno, he didn't have the money to; he was broke. He was one of the fellas that would put off the bad news because he didn't want to think about it. And then the Internal Revenue walks in or the Social Security people or whatever—the rent and—.

But anyway, I brought him up here, and we made a deal, and I made a fair deal. I bought what he had to sell that I wanted. I'd been to Florida to look at it one time, which was really fun. That's before he got broke, he showed me all his cars in Palm Beach, Florida; he had a museum near there. (I guess I should have said that first.) He was a wonderful host down there. That's when he still had a little money, and he took me to lunch, and it was very nice. And he got broke, broke, broke. Fact, we bought a bus from him—not a bus, a housecar—it's a Winton housecar. It's in the museum; it's one of a kind. See, Winton was a car made mostly in the 'teens, and it was a big, powerful car. And someone had stretched this Winton chassis and put a big old house on it. And it's a beautiful thing. It's in the museum; you should look at it sometime.

The rear of it looks like the rear of a train. In fact, it was built for a man in—forget what state it was. He was running for governor. And he toured the state in this housecar, and, as they used to do in the old days, they toured in a train and then go on the back platform and make a speech. But he had this housecar, and he'd go on the back platform of the housecar and make a speech. The only sad part of the story is that he finished fourth in—[laughs].

But anyway, Melton had this Winton, and I just loved it. And this was a separate deal. I'd bought some cars, and then the Winton came. Well, he didn't want to sell the Winton. Then he got to hurtin', so he sold the Winton. So I

think it was ten thousand dollars, which was a fair price. It's a very valuable piece. And it was in Massachusetts or somewhere. And come to find out, he owed a lot of money, and they had attached the Winton, but he—that was after I'd bought it. I had title to it, but Jimmy put it in as part of an asset to some loan. So they'd attached the Winton. Well, it was my Winton, but there was this attachment against it in, I think, Massachusetts. So I sent Catlett back to get it. And Bud's quite a guy. And we didn't know about the attachment; we just knew we couldn't get the Winton. And it was our Winton; I had the title to it. And I told Bud, I said, "Go back and if you can steal that damn Winton, steal it! It's our car."

So he got back there and he found out about this attachment. And the sheriff—and there was a sticker on the door, and all that sort of thing, you know, and just, "What are we gonna do?" And it's, you know—be years. So Bud's callin' me, and I asked my lawyer, and they said, "Well, can you get the thing to [the next state]" whichever it was—about ten miles, said, "get it over there, then it's your bus because you have the title and it kills that state thing."

So I said, "Hey, Bud, can you get it over there?"

And he said, "Well, there's a deputy here," but he said, "I'll sure as hell give it a try." So he figured when the deputy went to dinner or somethin', and he snuck in the back door somehow. And the deputy was one of those—or whatever it was—type of title he had, wasn't watchin' his job too hard. So Bud got in the building from the back somehow, and the—. It hadn't run in years, but Bud is a mechanic. So he got the thing runnin'; it didn't run too good but it ran. And he saw that there was gas in it and got a little air in the tires. And then when the fella made a round or went somewhere, Bud got the damn thing out and

started down the road to the [laughing] next state! It would make a wonderful movie 'cause it was sputterin' and missin', you know! And Bud's lookin' at his watch and wonderin'—I guess there was a way if you looked in the window, you could see the damn thing was goin'. And word did get around before Bud got to the border that someone had taken off with it. I guess he had a radio, and he could hear on the radio, "Look for this old bus." But anyway, he got across the line. And of course, I'm in here; I couldn't get away, or I'd'a been there. And he called me with a big—you could hear the grin on the phone, you know. Said, "Bill, I'm in Rhode Island," you know.

I said, "Oh wow! How in the hell did you do that?" [Laughing]

But he said, "Well, touch and go!" And he said, "This damn thing—." Well, they do have a—. A Winton has an air starter that's standard. And then they have air to feed the gas instead of a fuel pump or a vacuum tank. And sometimes there's a leak in the air, and you have to keep pumpin' it to get gas. He said, "That damn leak! And I'm pumpin' and it's missin', and I'm pumpin' and drivin' [laughs], lookin' in the rear view mirror!"

But anyway, we stole our Winton, and then as soon as we got it, then we brought it out here. It became our property. Poor ol' Melton. Oh, he had yachts and things. Real tragic career.

'course, Melton told me a funny story on Henry Ford, Sr. See, Henry Ford, Sr. really loved cars. He was a genius in his own way, and also he made a collection, which still exists, you know, in Dearborn there. They have a name for it, and I forget—I do know it. We loan them cars from time to time cause they have shows and things, and they have plenty of wonderful cars and, you know, a lot of early Fords that they should have. But anyway, Melton sang for Ford (The Ford

Sunday Hour, or something), so he got to know Mr. Ford, not closely, you know, but it was a big thing. And Melton was the biggest star in radio at the time.

So anyway, Ford had a car that Melton wanted real bad. And he was a car—Melton knew his Cars; he knew. So Ford had this car (like a Bugatti Royale or somethin’—just oooh, super car), and Melton thought, “How can I get that?” And he thought, “Well, I am a big star. Maybe I can get Mr. Ford—” ’cause Mr. Ford would give cars away; if he liked you, he’d give you a car. Said, “Maybe I can get Mr. Ford to give me that.” So he thought, “How—I gotta work this right. I can’t ask for it— that won’t work.” So he thought, “Well, I’ll give him a car, and then maybe he’ll say, ‘Well, can I give you a car?’”

So Melton inquired around, or talkin’ to Mr. Ford, and there was one little car that Ford didn’t have. It was kinda rare; it was a nothin’ car, a two-cylinder somethin’ or other. But Ford had just never been able to find one, and he wanted one because it was part of automotive history. So Melton found one. He knew a lot of car people, and he kept in touch, so Melton found it. He thought, “Well, I’ll give this car to Mr. Ford, and then Ford’ll maybe say, you know, ‘Which one— can I give you something?’”

So they waited, and there was a time when they’d won the award, and it was renewing the contract, or—it was the big high point of the year. So there, the meeting, and you know, on the state, the whole thing—and here’s Henry Ford, Sr. and James Melton, and the lights and all, and whatever speeches were made. And then Melton said, “Mr. Ford, I have a little surprise for you.

Mr. Ford: “Ooh, what’s that?” So he lifted the curtain and here was this 19-somethin’ whatever it was that Mr. Ford had looked

for for years. And Mr. Ford said, “Wow! It’s a such-and-such!”

And Melton said, “That’s for you, Mr. Ford. That’s a gift from me.”

And Mr. Ford says, “Thank you very much.” [Laughs] (Them as has, gets, or whatever.)

But we got the Nethercutt collection and the—what was the fella from San Bernardino?—Shafer—and Rockefeller and Melton. We bought some other collections. It’s kind of a good way of buyin’ ’em when you can ’cause you get ’em almost wholesale. And like with Melton, I remember I had to get that through the board of directors—so nice, it was nearly a million dollars. And they—yea, yea, yea, and on; they’re always—and I can’t blame ’em, you know. Costs a lot of money, these cars, and I’m always wantin’ more. But I presented it good; I said, “Well, here’s the chance, here’s the cars that we need.” And I said, “I’m confident—I know my business—in that we can buy that collection for—” (I had a figure, around a million—a little less, ’cause we’d negotiated and we knew who else was interested) “about a million dollars, and we can keep these—.” And there were about—I think there were sixty cars they had, or sixty or seventy. And there’s about thirty we wanted, so I said, “We can buy them for the million, and then we can sell the forty, so we’ll get the thirty.” Get the thirty wonderful, beautiful restored cars—. It cost a million, and we could sell the excess for six hundred, so we’d get thirty of the best ones for four hundred, and they were worth a million in themselves ’cause we bought it cheap. I don’t have the numbers exactly right. And then it was guesswork, but pretty good guesswork on my part, plus Catlett and everybody. And that’s exactly what happened.

I remember one of our outside directors, Ralph Phillips, who is an old-timer, and he’s

a real sharp old guy. And I remember they had to vote on it, and he thought awhile, and he said, "Well, okay, Bill. I think you know your business." And then that's exactly what happened. It came out just the way I said it would, which was a little luck, too. So we did, we got all these—about thirty cars for just rock-bottom price. And of course, they're in the collection now.

Then there've been many little ones where there're six cars and eight cars, you know. Somebody dies, why, usually things start goin' pretty fast. But most of 'em, you just buy one or so.

Do people bother you a lot to buy their old cars?

Yeah. Most of 'em are nothin', you know. But we get a lot of mail, a lot of it I don't see any more because they know what we want. But it'll be a, oh, '57 Ford, you know, with forty thousand miles. Well, we have a '57 Ford with five hundred miles, or maybe—. We get a lot of mail. And then a lot of it's kinda pitiful, too, 'cause you don't know what—. Like a lady will write, and it's usually a widow, and she'll have like a '53 Pontiac which she and her husband bought new, and they didn't drive it too much. And then it got old, and so they put it in the garage and bought a later car. But he died, and now the time has come. They loved that car, and they want it to go where it won't be hot-rodded or destroyed, you know. And we used to buy some of those just out of sympathy, but then we found we just can't do that, so we don't.

Then we're given a few cars under—that's quite of ten—under those, and if it's a car we want, why, we accept it. So we must have fifty or more gift cars—not expensive stuff, but some of it's pretty good.

Which ones can't you get? And why can't you get them?

Oh, well, some are nonexistent, and (let's see if I have a want list" here. No, I don't) . We have about fifty cars we still want, but some are nonexistent, and some are maybe existent—there's only three or four—the present three or four owners don't want to sell, or they want a lot more than they're worth. So some you have to wait out.

And then some are just like that 1899 Packard; that's in this—I can't remember the name of the university. The man that started the university gave 'em that Packard, and that's kind of the high point, and it's in the science building, and it's on display there. We tried to buy that, and one time they quoted me a price. And I tried to bargain with 'em; I made a mistake. I should've paid the price, but at the time the price was very high. Today it would be a bargain, and I didn't do it. But things like that, just how are you gonna get 'em? And you can't have 'em all; I resolved myself to that.

There's one car that I like very much that I don't have, is a Chadwick. That was a car about 1908, and they were about 1907 through 1910—very high performance car. And it was chain drive which is good, but it had these copper water jackets. Later, Cadillac had them. And copper, as you know, is a good conductor of heat. And the early motors—early engines—most of 'em ran hot, even the best ones; they ran hot. They had these radiators, but the pumps weren't too good, and it wasn't too well designed, and the engine just ran hot, and there was a lot of steam. When you see pictures of the cars steamin', well, they steamed. It was just—they weren't designed too good. And Chadwick came out, and they put these massive copper water jackets on their engine, so it ran cool; it was just a beautiful design. And they built only three or four hundred of them, but they were extremely high performance because of

the design; they had overhead valves, which a lot of cars had, and all. But the whole car was designed well; the engine was designed well. But with these copper water jackets, it ran cool, so it could just—not the first mile, but forty miles later it was still running cool. So Chadwicks won a lot of races. So I've always wanted a Chadwick when I heard about the first one. I didn't know there were any, and you're lookin', you're lookin', and oh, is there a Chadwick? Does anybody have a Chadwick? No, no, no, no! And I looked up, and there were less than four hundred of 'em built. So anyway, I heard of one in Pennsylvania. A Bill Pollack had it (who's a friend of mine). And he had it; he didn't want to sell it. And he had a collection, so okay.

So then I heard of another one up in—somewhere; I had the wind of another Chadwick. So you go here and it's—well, that was five years ago, and the man's name was so-and-so. So you run that down. Then you go to another state, and the man's name was such-and-such, and you keep followin' this little trail. I got warmer and warmer, this Chadwick, Chadwick, Chadwick. It had been in an accident; the body had been destroyed, but the chassis still existed. Then it was on a farm up in Minnesota or somewhere in that area. It had been in this back field for a long time, so long, and the frame, you know—the body was gone, but the engine and the frame. A little tree had grown, and the tree'd grown up through the frame. So here's the tree, and the car's around the tree.

So I got this lead, and I'm workin', and I got people workin', and, "Where is the farm?" and all. So finally we found it and got there and got in, and the tree had been cut down two days before, or sawed off and the Chadwick lifted off and gone. It wasn't stolen; they'd made a deal. And, "Who got it? Who got it?" And there was a big mystery there,

and we chased that down. And it was Bill Pollack, the man with the other Chadwick. So I went to him—no, well, he'd think about it. And in the meantime he didn't think about it at all. He put a speedster body on it, and he made a nice little car out of it. So he has the two Chadwicks, and he gets a big kick out of havin' two Chadwicks. And I've tried every trick in the book to get one of 'em. I've made big offers. And we're friends—we're real good friends—but he said, "I got two Chadwicks and you don't have any, and that's the way it's gonna stay for a while!" And of course, those kind of people can come back, you know—"Well, you've got two Bugatti Royales, and I don't have any," so—. He's a good guy. And he may—. Every once in a while, he says, "You know, I'm thinkin' I may let you have one of the—." So, maybe. But you know, it used to bug me, but now I realize, you know, we have a wonderful collection and should be happy. Like the two Bugatti Royales—there's only six of those in the world; we have two. And we're lucky to get either one, and to get both is really remarkable.

Another story that's kinda fun to tell is, a lot of these cars—and a lot of these collectors—when it's just the person doin' it themselves just for their own fun, like the car's two thousand dollars, but the old farmer (whoever he is) said, "I don't want a check; I want the money, because—."

And I said, "Well, you—." Well you don't have to ask why, because they've had it for years, and they would have to pay capital gains on it. And many people would do that. You know, when the manes just buyin' one car—and so he would do that. But I can't do it because, well, we always pay our taxes 'cause we don't want Internal Revenue on us, plus being a public company, so two ways—. But this one story happened long before we were a public company.

I'd found a 1907 Thomas, and I'd found a 1909 Thomas, and I wanted to get every year Thomas. And I'd already looked for a 1906 Thomas, and I couldn't find one, couldn't find one. So finally I got a lead on one in Oklahoma. So I went down, and was it there or wasn't it?—it's always a mystery, you know. And you can't ask the car people in the area, because they probably know the car; they don't want you to get it. And then if they don't know the car, you're tippin' your mitt. So you gotta do it on your own.

So I went down, and we didn't have planes then, but I loved to do that sort of thing, so I would fly commercial and rent a car and go out and look and finally—. I found the farm, I found the farmer, and I found the 1906 Thomas. And he was typical—he wasn't too friendly. And you have to get their attention. People had been tryin' to buy it real cheap, so he didn't want to sell it. And I said, "Well, how's (let me see)—how's twenty-five hundred dollars?"

And he said, "Ooh? Not too bad. Make it four thousand."

And I said, "No, three thousand"—and back and forth. So finally—well, thirty-five hundred dollars, we agreed on, I think, which was a good price.

So then he said, "I gotta have it in cash."

And I said, "Well, I don't do that."

And he—"Well, then you got no deal."

And I said, "I can't do that." I said, "Internal Revenue is on my back, and I just can't do that, and I won't do it." I said, "I'll—." But I thought of somethin'. So I said, "Okay." I said, "Thirty-five hundred dollars." I said, "Say you got the car for nothin', so your tax will be thirty-five hundred dollars, right?" And I said, "I don't know how good you do on your farm, but," I said, "this will be a capital gain," and that the capital gain the most at that time was twenty-five percent. So I said, "The most the tax can

possibly be is twenty-five percent." So I said, "Twenty-five percent of thirty-five hundred dollars is—" no, it was three thousand—"is seven hundred and fifty dollars." So I said, "I'll pay you the three thousand dollars, plus seven hundred and fifty dollars." So I said, "You got your three thousand and you got your tax, so [spreads hands] what's wrong with that?"

So, "Well, that's pretty good." so I started to write out the check, and he said, "How about the tax on the tax?" [laughs]—which he has a point, see, because instead of a three-thousand-dollar base, it becomes a thirty-seven fifty.

So I said, "Okay, one tax!" And so I refigured it again. But I said, "Don't ask me for the tax on the tax on the tax!" [Laughs]

And by then we were pretty good friends, and he laughed, he said, "No, that's as far as I can ask you to go."

Then I bought a 1909 Thomas down in Lakeport that had been a—it's a six-cylinder Thomas. You know, six is better 'n tour, and then I'd had several four-cylinder Thomases by then. But this was a big Six Flyabout. Yeah, Bill Bassett—Lakeport. And this car'd been sittin' out in a field down there, and this guy was kind of a junk dealer, and he had old, but modern junkers. And this Thomas, you could see it from the road, and it was a six-cylinder Thomas, which is a rare car. And someone had told me about it—the six-cylinder Thomas down by Lakeport. I said, "Oh my God! A six-cylinder Thomas!"

Said, "You can't buy it. Don't even talk to the man. He's a weirdo, he's a hermit, he's—" this 'n' that.

And I thought, "Well, boy, I'm sure gonna try." And I remember I drove down; and I even took a trailer, which is good when you're dealin' with a weirdo 'cause if you can buy the car, you want to get it out of there fast. I knew a lot of angles by then, and one is to take a lot

of time. So I went down, and I didn't drive up with the trailer; I left the trailer around the corner, which is good. I just drove up, and I was kinda hick. I said, "Bill Bassett?"

I said, "I'm Bill Harrah from Reno," which didn't mean a thing.

And he said, "Yeah, what do you want?"

And I said, "Well, you got a six-cylinder Thomas—do you have a six-cylinder Thomas?"

"Yeah, I got one."

And I said, "Can I look at it?"

He said, "Well, awright." So went over, and there's kind of a shed there and boxes and things, and he pulled this off and this off and this off. And there was the Thomas. I knew what to expect. It had been a Sport Touring, but the body'd been gone; it'd been made into a trucker, and the fenders were gone, and the headlights were gone, and—but the chassis was there, and the seat was there, and the hood, and the engine. Previous people that had tried to buy it, I guess—I'm pretty sure, had said, "That ol' pile of junk," you know, "what do you want for that?" you know. "I'll give ya fifty dollars."

But I said, "Boy! That's the first six-cylinder Thomas I have ever saw. That's just beautiful! Look at that hood, look at those cylinders, look at that transmission, look at—" you know, and I admired the car and I raved about it. I said, "Woo!"

I think the most anybody'd tried to pay 'im was either two or five hundred dollars—up till then. So I said, "Gee, I'd love to have that car. Is it for sale?"

And he said, "Well, no," he said, "everybody tries to steal it."

And I said, "Well, can I make you a fair offer on it?"

And he says, "Okay. That's your offer?"

And I said, "Thirty-five hundred dollars."

[Opens eyes wide] "Ooh!" So he thought about it quite a while, and then I think he

said (I get this deal mixed up with another deal)—think he said, "Four."

Then I—you always hesitate; you don't—although you'd pay ten, you don't say. "Okay!" You think about it and think about it, and then you say, "Okay," or you offer thirty-five—I think I paid him four. I had the money in cash, and I had a bill of sale. I counted the cash, and I got him to sign the bill of sale, and I ran around the corner and got my trailer and put it on, and away I went! [Laughs]

But my favorite story on Thomases—the first one I bought was in San Francisco. That was a 1907 Thomas, and I'd been lookin' for one—I loved the Thomas car—the lines and the design and all. I didn't even know of any, but I wanted a Thomas. So one day at the cashier's cage down here, there was left a picture of a Thomas out of a catalog. Someone had torn a page out of a 1907 Thomas catalog of a Thomas Touring, and had written on it in hand, "I have one like this if you're interested," and he had an address in San Francisco—a Henry Bersuess. So boy, the next day I'm on my way down there with a trailer. I stopped by at Catlett's on the way. I said, "I'm on a wild goose chase for a Thomas." I said, "I don't know, guy may be pullin' a gag." Bud, you could trust, you know. I told him the whole story. I said, "You want to go along?"

He said, "No, I have to work."

And I said, "Well, this comes at a bum time 'cause I got a lot to do." I said, "I'm gonna go down and try to buy the car."

Bud said, "No way!" He said, "I've been all over San Francisco; there's not a Thomas down there, no way! Forget it!"

And I said, "Well, I'm gonna look anyway."

So I went down, and this address was a San Francisco address in those houses, you know [gestures tall and narrow], that are side by side. So I went, and I had a terrible time finding it, and I was all by myself. And

I have trouble in San Francisco, now with a chauffeur, but I just—oh, it took me hours to find it. And I found the street finally, and I found the address. And I went up and rang the doorbell. And this lady answered it, and I said, “Is there a Thomas Flyer here?”

And she spoke broken. She said, “I don’t know anybody named Thomas Flyer.”

And I said, “Oh, no!—car, car!”

And, “No.”

So it was kind of a multiple—I wasn’t sure which room I had or—and all. So I said, “Okay, thank you.” She closed the door, and I read it again, and I [clicks]—well, she didn’t understand me. So then I got the picture of the car. I rang the doorbell; again she came, and I said, “Sane guy.”

“Oh, what do you want?”

I said, “The Thomas car!” And I showed her the picture.

And she said, “No! Get away! Please!”

So I thought, “Brother! I guess I’m—I guess it was a phony.” SO I looked at the thing again, and it said one-oh-and a half. And I thought, “Well, maybe that’s a three there— I’m not sure.” And that was the one over here. By then I really didn’t care, so I pushed that one. And another lady came, and kinda broken, and, “What do you want?” And I—well, she could speak English pretty good, and she said, “What do you want?”

And I said, “I understand there’s a Thomas Flyer here.”

And she said, “Thomas Flyer? What’s that?”

And I said, “It’s a car!”

“What?”

So I pulled out the picture again. I showed it to her. And she looked at it, and she said, “Oh, that old thing! It’s right here.” And she took me down and lifted the garage door, and there it was sitting, and jacked up. An absolutely original car—everything was there

but the taillights; just—it’d been sitting there for thirty years, I guess—just a beautiful thing. Ooh!

So then I rushed up, and I said, [rooks through papers] “Are you Mrs. Bersuess?”

And she said, no, but she knew him, and she gave me an address, where I could find him.

I said, “Can I call?”

“No.”

So I went down and had a terrible time finding it, finally got down—it was down on the waterfront, and it was a bar. It was a real crummy bar, like, you know, you get shanghaied or something—real tough and dirty. It was afternoon, I went in, and there was nobody there but the bartender. So I went up to the bar—and one little guy sittin’ on the end of the bar drinkin’ beer. So I went up to the bartender, and I said, “Do you know a Henry Bersuess?” And so I showed him the car; I said, “Do you know—?”

And he said, “No.”

And so I thought, “Brother I”

So this little guy sittin’ on the end of the bar and he’s sittin’—he looked like an Apache or somethin’. And he’s a little guy, and he had his cap pulled down and his coat turned up, and he’s smokin a cigarette. And so I went over to him, and I said, “Do you know a Henry Bersuess?”

And he said, “Who wants to know?”

And I said, “Well—” I pulled out the picture of the Thomas. I said, “I’m Bill Harrah from Reno. This was sent to me in Reno. And I’m lookin’—” and it said Henry Bersuess on the paper.

And he said, “I’m Henry Bersuess.”

“Oh! Well, you know,” blah, blah, blah—I’d seen the car. Then he loosened up once we got to talkin’. And I said, “You want to sell—?”

“Yeah, I want to sell it. That’s why I sent you the picture.”

I said, "What'll you take for it?"

"What'll you give me?"

And I said—and of course, I had the money in my pocket; I had a lot of money [laughs]. "That do you want?"

And he said, "Make me an offer."

I said, "No, what do you want?"

Finally he said (let me get it right [consults papers])—. We were gettin' along real good, so he said, "I'll take twenty-five hundred dollars," which was about right, maybe a little high, but about right.

And I always liked to bargain a little bit, so I hesitated, and I said, "Well" (he was pretty friendly by then), I said, "I'll give you—I'll give you two thousand." So he went like that [folds arms], and you could feel the chill. Ana I thought Oh my God, I've blown the deal. So I thought, Well, what do I do?" And I'd a paid him four thousand, and I thought, "Well, should I give him the twenty-five?" And I thought, "Well, I'll wait." I said, "I'll count to ten, and if by then he hasn't taken the two thousand, I'll give him the twenty-five hundred." So I went [mumbles], "One, two, three..." I got to nine and he says, "I'll take it" [laughs].

So I counted out the money and got the title and backed the trailer up and—. He was friendly, he was real friendly then. He helped me load it, and away we went. But he'd found that car in San Francisco. It had lived through the fire— see, it was a 1907 car. Fact there's some old San Francisco pictures—and of course, Thomas was quite a popular car in those days—but there are pictures of San Francisco right after the earthquake on Market Street, and there's a Thomas Flyer goin' down Market Street rescuing people.

That was a famous car in Nevada, you know—a Thomas. I mean there were Thomases here; there's lots of pictures of Thomases, and they raced 'em and—. Oh, Bob Douglass, I think he had one at one time.

The real favorite, of course, is the "around the world" Thomas. And the reason for that—well, I like Thomas Flyers, but that's such a historical car. Then after that, there're just so many, you don't know where to start. Most of them pictured here [in catalog] are just—you know, I like 'em, so it's—I like Franklins and Fords, Duesenberg. It's really difficult—the "favorite" thing. There're some that I prefer, but I'd really have to work to make—and I'd imagine out of the 1450, I'd probably pick three or four hundred top ones, but I like 'em all pretty well.

Maybe you'd like to just go on describing, then, how you came across these, and your forays into collecting. Have you found a lot in Nevada, for example, or are they mostly from out of state?

No, most of 'em are from out of state. I think I've only gotten three or four in Nevada. But the reason for that, it's really very simple, that an old car to remain in existence, it has to be protected, so it's protected by someone putting it in a barn or garage. If it's left out in the desert like— and you can—of course, the deserts have been, oh, picked pretty well. In fact, I used to go out in uh—what's that town this side of Elko, first town?

Carlin. There was an old fella out there that had a junk yard on the side of a hill. Can't remember his name; I'll get it, though. Wonderful man. He was bedridden; I think broke his hip or something, but very active mind. I went out there, and he had signs all over his property, "Keep Out," "Stay Away," and all. It had been a junkyard, but because he was crippled and he couldn't get out of the house (he had a wife that took care of him), people were stealin' things and all, and it was pretty unprotected. But he was a wonderful man; we became real good friends, and I'll get his name. I got acquainted just by my

enthusiasm for cars, I guess. So I went in, and I remember the first time I was there, I bought a—hm, a '13 Cadillac and a '13 Pope Hartford. He was a fellow who loved to talk, and of course, I'd learned that on previous—so I didn't rush him at all; I'd listen, and he'd heard about me and liked to talk about Nevada and gambling and you name it—he loved to talk. He was a very sharp old fella.

So we finally got around to the cars, and I kept bringin' the cars up, and he'd change the subject and go into other things. So finally, he asked me a hundred dollars apiece, which was fine. I would've paid him the instant, but he was the kind of fella that didn't want that, I knew. He wanted me to bargain with him and all, so we bargained! I offered him seventy-five or fifty, I think—yeah, fifty. And we bargained for a couple of hours, and he'd talk about everything, and then we'd get back—"Well, gee" (by then I was "Bill"). "Gee, Bill, you can go a little better'n that."

And I said, "Well, they're ol' rusty old things," and da da da da da da. They were pretty good but had been sittin' out in the desert for years. But there's a couple that came from Nevada. And the Pope Hartford was bought new in Elko (that was a fact). But anyway, finally we settled on seventy-five apiece. And I paid him.

Then I'd go to Elko quite a bit, and I'd go to Idaho, and I'd always stop and see him. So I must have seen him ten, fifteen, twenty times. And he was always glad to see me 'cause—well, you know—bedridden, you're glad to see people. And he always wanted to know what kind of car I was drivin'; I always had a different car. And then I would buy a lot of parts; he had a lot of good parts like rear axles and hoods and radiators and wheels and things like that. And he got to trusting me, SO I would have usually a fellow with me, and we'd have a truck or some car—pickup. And

we'd go in, and I'd go see him first. You know, I'd say, "Here we are again."

And he'd say, "Go ahead, see what you can find." So we'd load up the truck with what we wanted, and we'd come back. And he wouldn't check it, or he wouldn't ask his wife to. He'd say, "What do you have?" And I'd have a little list, and we'd just go down 'em, and usually we'd arrive right now—you know, the radiator, five dollars, the so-and-so—just bing-bing-bingbing-bing. But he knew everything he had, exactly. And you'd ask questions—"What's that off of, you know, that generator?"

And so, "Oh, that's of f of so-and-so." He was a fun old guy. Then he finally died. I had about everything off of the place by the time he died. But I think I went and see—I'll give myself credit: I went and saw him a few times after he was about empty, just 'cause he was such a fun old fella. And he knew, you know, who's runnin' for governor—and "that dumbbell," and oh boy, he—. And he said it the way it was; it was very refreshing to hear from him.

Those were Nevada. And then I got a Chalmers, which didn't amount to much, just the fact that, well, my father had a Chalmers before—but it came out of Carlin. We got a few around—the fire engine down in, oh, Goldfield, I think. Got a car down in Las Vegas; we got a couple in Vegas. But what I started to say, that Nevada had cars in the early days. They had a lot of wonderful cars, but there was no place for 'em to—no buildings; where so many of the cars come out of the East, where there're these old mansions with a carriage house. And the mansion's still standing, and the carriage house. And so if somebody dies and eventually opens up, why, there's Pierce Arrows and all sorts of things there, so that's how cars are preserved. And you know,

it makes a lot of sense when you think about it.

Have you regretted sometimes that the scrap drives of the war came along? Have you thought about that in any detail?

Yeah, well, many times you go and—. Used to be an old fella up north of Salt Lake, Pierce Arrow collector. IL think his name was Puss Whitaker. Fuss was a nickname 'cause he was a real crabby old guy. And it took me a long time to get where he trusted me. He was strictly Pierce Arrows, and they had cast-aluminum bodies. And he protected them, but then he'd acquired some later and a part of it'd be missing, you know. What happened on those scrap drives, you know, which it was good and bad. It's sad to see a car destroyed, but on the other hand, it makes the ones a left a little more valuable for what that's worth. But of course, many of those scrap drives, they weren't the—. The intent was good, but the execution was terrible. Like I remember they had a tire drive here in Reno, and I had a '42 Packard. And so the war and the tires—so I bought 'em used, but it was an unusual size. It was a new size, so there weren't too many, and I bought, I think, two extra sets of tires, so I had ten extra tires. And the drive came along, and I remember I paid ten or twenty dollars for each one. And they were good tires; they were used but good tires. And the scrap drive, and it was patriotic. And I wasn't too patriotic about my tires. But then there was a threat of enforcement, too, which got my attention, so I turned in my tires. And I remember they gave me a dollar apiece, and then they took 'em somewhere, and I think they just sat on top of each other for years, and it just was—. And you couldn't really blame anybody; somebody goofed, of course, but you can't blame the war effort for it. You know we were at war. Don't want to lose.

ACCESSORIES AND PARTS

One of the things that you haven't talked about much in connection with the cars is the accessories. Do you have the early radios? And then there was a thing called the Kimball ball-bearing jack.

Yeah, we have some cars we show accessories on, and some we don't. And just if the car comes with a spotlight and it's the correct period, the accessory has to be of the period. Quite often you'll find accessories that—a person bought a car in 1926, an accessory came out in '31, they still own the car, they'll put it on the car; well, that's incorrect. So we'll remove that, but, yes, we do have all except your ball-bearing jack I'm not familiar with. So yes, we have accessories, about every kind, I think. And they are on display on a car. And then, I don't know if we say on the sign that it is an accessory, but that's part of our description of a car, like it was a light hung on the front of a radiator, and you had a remote control and you could light a spotlight. And they were very popular in the late '20s, and there's a name for it. But it was very practical, except it was kinda ugly. I think we only have one left on a car; it's a '26 Stutz. And it was put on very nicely, but it just spoils it; and we've had many cars with those, and we've removed them just because [chuckling]—we have the one on display and the others, why, it makes a much prettier car.

There were many ugly accessories, so we remove a lot of those.

My first radio I bought was a Transitone, and that was the early '30s. You had to take the whole dash out of the car and put it in; it had two dials to turn, like the radios at the time. It was a wonderful thing. And we found a car—we weren't lookin' for it; we just acquired it. It's a Stearns, a 29 Stearns, and it has this radio in

it. And it's installed beautifully, so that's our example of a radio, an early radio.

But—huh! [chuckles] fortunately, we also have another '29 Stearns that has a much prettier body. And we'd like to sell one, but we want to keep the pretty body, and we also have to keep the one with the radio, so we have two cars that are almost identical, but we have to have 'em both. But it's very interesting, that radio. I'd like to show it to you sometime when we're up there. 'cause I had one just like it; I put it in a Ford, but it was the wrong radio for the car, which was my fault. I bought it cheap; I bought it at an auction or something. Later I got a pretty good radio.

Have you had similar kinds of adventures in collecting these accessories as you have with the cars? I mean do you just happen to run across those?

Well, yes, you run across—there's like these swap meets in Hershey and the one we have here—well, that's where the accessories and parts come in. I have a favorite story on some wheels. In 1928 Chrysler was a wonderful car. There was a Chrysler 52—Chrysler called their cars by miles per hour. So the first Chrysler was a Chrysler 6. Then in 1926, they started and they had a Chrysler—the Chrysler 6 became the Chrysler 70. And they came out with a bigger Chrysler that was called the Chrysler 80.

Then in '27, they continued the 70 and the 80, and they came out with a 60, which was a smaller one, and a 50. It was a four-cylinder, so that was fifty miles, sixty, seventy, which was a little goofy in the 50 'cause it would do a little better'n that.

But anyway, then in '28, just—this is advertising and sellin' cars. They called 'em the 52, the 62, the 72, and they left it at 80. But anyway, the 62 and the 72 had beautiful wire

wheels. They were one of a kind. And there are many different kinds of wire wheels, but the '28 Chrysler wire wheel to me is just beautiful. So I had a '29 Ford that I liked very much—a '29 Cabriolet that I'd hopped up (and I have one like in the museum). But I wanted to go further. The '29 wheels didn't look like much on a Ford. There were adapters that you could put 1928 Chrysler wheels on a Ford, which I did. And it was just beautiful. I'll show you that in the Collection. Made a different car out of it, and they made the car—well, they were twenty-one-inch wheel on the Ford and twenty-eight on the Chrysler, but there was more tire and it was chubbier and all, and the wheels set out a little. It was just a doll-baby thing.

But anyway, I loved my '29 Ford, and then I sold it and tried to buy it back, and I think they'd sold it; I lost it. So we built one up like it at the HAC. But I needed these '28 Chrysler wheels, and they're very scarce. So we just looked, and we looked, and we looked, and we looked, and we looked.

So I was at Hershey, Pennsylvania one year, and that's where they have all the parts, you know—eleven hundred people with parts. And I was walkin' around, and I usually had somebody with me, like Catlett or somebody that knew—I knew some of 'em pretty good, and I'd have an expert with me. So anyway, walkin' along, and there was a set of '28 Chrysler wheels the fella had. So I played it real cool. And I went over, and I looked and I said, "What are those funny-lookin' wheels?"

And he said, "I think they're Chrysler."

I said, "How many do you have?" (and I needed five)

And he said, "I have five." And I counted, and he did have five.

So I said, "How much do you want for 'em?"

He said, "Five dollars apiece," which was fine. But again, you have to bargain.

So I said, "Twenty-five dollars?!" And I was about ready to offer him fifteen, but I was reachin' in my pocket, and then— just then, two fellas came up behind me. You know, there's people millin' around.

And one of 'em said to the other one, he said, "My God, there's a—there's a set of '28 Chrysler wire wheels."

And I said, "Here's your twenty-five dollars!" [Laughs] So he took it in his hand.

And the other fella said, "What do you want for 'em?"

And he said, "I just sold 'em to this fella."

And the guy said, "Il you take for 'em?"

And I said, "I don't want to sell 'em."

He said, "I'll give you fifty."

I said, "No."

"I'll give you a hundred." But boy, how close that was! I was lucky I had the money in my hand, 'cause I got it in his hand, you know. He was a nice guy, anyway, but you know, in a case like that, you could—. And after lookin'—I'd looked for several years before I went—. Anyway, I got 'em, which was happy day.

Where were we? I always get off the subject.

Why don't you go along that vein there for a little while and tell me about some of the other things that you've discovered in the same way.

Oh, parts. Well, parts are—accessories, it was.

But parts, I'm sure, must be equally important to you.

Well, they're more important 'cause— Well, we have accessories of the period in many cars; they came pretty simple. Wind wings were on an open car—were a nice

accessory, and special horn was fun and—bought a cut-out which bypassed the muffler, you know—made noise—puff, puff, puff, puff, puff— which was fun, but also they were pretty. They were kinda practical in a way, 'cause the early cars, the muffler and the exhaust system wasn't as efficient as it could be, and there was some back pressure, which didn't matter too much, but like you're climbin' a hill or something and you—it's like a Model T Ford, and you're just barely pullin' it, and you could actually open the cut-out and just get a little more power, just enough to pull it up. Plus the sound—fun of the sound— that was great. 'course, every car I had up to a point always had cut-outs or special exhaust. Let's see, when did I quit the special exhaust? See, in my '46—I think when I got into Packards, I got away from it, 'cause they had an excellent exhaust system. Prior to that, I think I modified every car.

And then parts and restoring, that's a big problem with this. And we have many parts we ye collected over the years, and we have them cataloged so we can actually have a '22 Cole and need a taillight for it, and we can probably find that taillight in the matter of within an hour, just 'cause our taillights are together. Many of 'em are labeled, and if they're not, we have pictures of it. The library gets it, and here's a picture, and then we go. And when we have a restoration manual on a car, they will look the car over and label the parts missing. And say, the taillight was missing, but they will describe what kind of a taillight it is and actually have a little picture of it in there, so—.

Then when we go to Hershey, we take about ten people to buy parts, and that's primarily their job—parts. And everyone has a book that we prepare beforehand. And then one page taillights that we need—a description and the diameter and the so on,

so on, the maker, and all the headlights we need— so on, so on. And we do very well. And we put a green tag on 'em when we get something, and that's needed on the so-and-so car. And then when we get back, we always—well, how successful did we do at Hershey? How successful were we at Hershey, is the number of "green tag" items. And we'll come back with, oh, I'd say maybe fifty or more, maybe a hundred "green tag" items. That's a taillight or a sidelight or a hubcap or for certain cars—specific—something needed. So we do pretty good. Of course, it's expensive in a way, but overall it isn't, 'cause you have ten fellas; most of them work there anyway, so there's not too much more in salary. And they love it—being there. It's almost like a vacation for them. They're so proud—they have little bags they bring tem back, and how many "green tag" items they get. Then when they come back, why, we line them all up, so it's a fun thing. We take a great big huge trailer; we have about six spaces now. In fact, we take two big trailers and fill 'em full of parts. And something we learned—I did it—I'm very proud of that one—is I've been going to Hershey for years, and when I first started, it was just me and [one] other fella or something; we'd get up in the morning, and there's thousands of people there.

And you go at seven in the morning—you want to get as early as you can—and there wasn't a restaurant in Hershey that you could get in. And you'd go, and there's a line, and you stand in line. And see, I'm the type of person, and many people are, that I just can't maneuver till I've had a good breakfast. Some of the fellas would go out and start working, and I just couldn't. I'd think, "I haven't eaten, I haven't eaten, I haven't eaten." So I'd go stand in line, and it would be very irritating. Finally, after a half an hour you get in and get seated, and the poor waitress, of course, is goin' crazy

and the chef's kinda mad and it would just be awful. And you'd go through that every year, and I said, "This is crazy."

So I thought, "Why can't we cook our own breakfast?" And then if we have this huge trailer—. So we tried that, and we took back a little stove and all. And we hired a lady there. I forget where we found her, but we did—some local fella and this lady, and she cooked breakfast. So we hired her every year and that was pretty good. And then she was with us a couple of years, and all the fellas could go there and have breakfast— whatever you wanted, and she had her little stove. I think she did it two years, and then she either quit or died or something. So then we got another one, and the next year she didn't even show up, so that was a disaster. And then the next year, I think we had a similar situation.

So what are we gonna do, what are we gonna do? And there's an answer to most problems, and so finally—well, gee whiz, we've got all kinds of chefs and cooks here! So we got one fella (I forget his name—I know him), and he's a professional chef, and a young fella, and a fun guy to be around. He's a hard worker. So we took him back one year, and he was just perfect. He just could fix anything anytime, and he works—and he fixes our lunches, too, now. And he likes it; it's kind of a vacation for him, and everybody knows him now. So he just goes back with us on the plane every year. It's the only time of the year I see him, is on the plane to Hershey. Then I see him every morning. And we're very popular; we invite our friends around for breakfast or for lunch. Then they come by—they come by anyway; everybody comes by visiting, so we have—plus our people, which is, well, I guess all of us put together, there's probably maybe fifteen from Harrah's. But I'd say breakfast, he must serve another fifteen or twenty or thirty, and lunch about the same way. We

have hot dogs and things for lunch. And it's just such a time saver, so it's just beautiful. But like many problems, there's an answer if you think—he likes it, we like it, and our friends like it. But there's not much more on parts and accessories, just that—we'll go out there sometime; I can show you the special—.

Well, one thing I like to talk about is the Model T Ford, which was quite a historical car, you know, at one time. More than fifty percent of the cars sold in the United States were Fords. I think they had sixty, seventy percent of the market one time just in the Model T Ford, period. I was a car enthusiast as a kid, of course. There's a magazine—they put out a magazine for it—and it was called Ford Dealer and Service Field. It was just for Ford owners and dealers. And I started buying that. And in it there were ads. And also the Western Auto was an accessory place in California mostly, and they put out a catalog.

But anyway, one time I looked, going through the catalog, and I realized that you could build a Model T Ford, and all you needed was the block, the cylinder block, 'cause there were accessory pistons, there were accessory connecting rods, there were accessory crank shafts, there were accessory radiators, there were accessory wheels, there were accessory springs, were accessory axles, accessory transmissions, accessory bodies, accessory lights, tops—you could—. You know, usually they weren't copies; they were a little different, maybe more stylish or something, which you could—. I always wanted to do that, but I never did; but you could build a Model T Ford, and all you had to use was a cylinder block. That was big business for a long time—Model T Ford accessories.

Then when the Model T went out, then the Model A—and they made accessories for that, and that one had had a lot of accessories.

But still there were so many things on the Model A that weren't on the Model T, like a gas gauge, and the lights were two-beam headlights, and so-and-so. And then as the cars went along, they got more complete, so the accessories went down where they weren't used too much. Like a car today, I usually put a few things on them. But where I used to hang hundreds of accessories, today I just put on—well, like I have a Jeep, and it has a turbo charger to make it go fast, and it has special exhaust because of the turbo charger. And it has special rearview mirrors, which I put on all my cars. They're fairly large, and I can control 'em from inside, so they're always in perfect adjustment. Every car should have that 'cause—well, you know, I have the center and I have the two sides, so I always know who's where. And what else? I also have [a] tachometer; on every car is a tachometer, which tells your r.p.m., which is good to know—which gear you're in, how fast your engine's turning (there's a limit on your engine, and I never turn 'em over the limit). It's funny, your European cars, most of 'em have tachometers as standard equipment. American cars don't, which—American cars are kinda dumb, most of 'em.

You've talked about gettin in and doing things to your cars; you've mentioned hanging some of the accessories on them and so forth. What has this amounted to? Are you a mechanic, or do you just enjoy decorating the cars?

Oh, accessories are decoration, but you go both ways. Like the lights and all are decoration, but the two-speed rear end and the dual exhaust and the special carburetor and all is performance. So I go both ways, of course.

So you do get out and tinker around in them.

No, I don't—no, I don't—I know what it's all about, and I have worked on 'em. My Model A, I worked on that. I put fuel-rated valves on. And what I couldn't do, I had done. Well, I take credit for that whole car. But I can work on 'em a little. I drove a Pope Hartford from Reno to southern California one year and then went on a tour down there, and when I came back—we were in San Bernardino. And rather than go through San Bernardino, you can cut across a desert there and come out around Little Lake. And I'd driven the road many times in my modern car, but I'd never driven it in an old car. But it was quite safe—fifty miles or so. So coming back, I took that shortcut across there, and it was just my wife and I in the Pope Hartford—no one else. And I liked the Pope; it ran very well. But we got out in the middle of nowhere and it started missing, and it concerned my wife quite a bit. But fortunately, I'd—well, I wouldn't've tried it if I hadn't had faith in the car 'cause it was a very good car. But when it would get a little warm, the rocker arms would expand I think more than the push rods, or vice versa. But they would miss, and it would miss, and it would run where it ran very badly. But I'd fortunately had experience with it before, and you had to stop the engine, get out, and get a wrench and loosen the push rod just a little. It'd take ten minutes or something. But my wife was concerned, the car was runnin' so terrible, and she didn't know that I knew it. And so I just calmly stopped, although I was a little—and had to turn the engine off out in the middle of the desert all by ourselves out there. But I lifted the hood and da da da da da, put the hood back down, put my tools away—well, I cranked it first. And it started and ran beautifully, and away we went. And she was so relieved. Plus she really bragged me up for years 'cause I would—. I made no claim to be a mechanic, you know. People like

you would say, "Well, could—do you work on the—?"

I say, "No, no, no, we got—"

And she—"That's not true! Remember when we were out in the middle of nowhere, Pope Hartford wouldn't run?" And she'd build it up, you know, so it sounded more than it really was. I understand usually, unless it's somethin' major, what it is. But like going to Australia, I'll sure have a mechanic along.

Do you really buy one of everything that comes out, as they come out?

No, just interesting cars. Well, see, we have every Ford starting in 1903, and they're still in business; so '77 Ford we buy, and '78 we buy—and then hopin' the Ford company [will] give us one, but they haven't, although they've given us other stuff. They gave us two beautiful Ford race cars that were worth twenty-five thousand dollars apiece at the time they gave 'em to us. They just gave 'em to us.

Then like Packard started in 1900 or 1899. We have 1900; there's only one 1899—we don't own that. That belongs to a school—college. But we have every year Packard; they ended in '58. And so we have every Packard, da da da da da. But then that was the end of the Packards; that's all we have. But as Ford is still going, we're still buying Fords. We have every year Franklin, every year Packard, every year Lincoln up to 19—hut, where did we quit on the Lincolns? About 1955, we quit on the Lincolns 'cause then they kinda got goin' in a different direction. But Pierce Arrow, we have every year. What—a Franklin, Packard, Ford, Pierce Arrow—. And then there's several we almost—like we're real long on Chevies. I think eventually we'll have every Chevy. Stutz, we have about every year. Pope Hartford, we have about every year. Thomas Flyer, we have about every year. Sounds nutty, doesn't it?

THE AROUND THE WORLD THOMAS FLYER

I don't think you have told me about Mr. Schuster and the Flyer.]

Okay. I d heard of the car. It's supposed to be the car that won the race around the world. Well, was it, wasn't it? There was a question—was it the car? And I'd never seen the car, and this friend of mine, Austin Clark, who lives in Long Island—has a museum there—and he's quite a fella; he knows cars very good. In fact, I see him; he's on the board of directors of the Cleveland Museum. I still see him; I see him once every three months. And he'd become quite a photographer. But anyway, he was a wealthy man, and he started collecting cars years ago, so he had a good collection. And he opened a little museum in Long Island; it's called the Long Island Automotive Museum. And his money came from sugar, and it was a very wealthy family. And most of the sugar was in Cuba. And when Castro took over, just overnight from being a rich fella, he was a poor fella. And it was very tragic. He didn't go broke, but it was just a whole different life, and he never really has adapted to it. And he's still kind of a spoiled rich kid; he's a lot better than he was, but he had this style of living and all, and he just couldn't realize that it was over. But when he did, then he wanted to sell some cars, and he contacted us, or we contacted him—I don't remember—but we got several nice cars from him, and one of 'em we got was the “around the world” Thomas. And he didn't say it was; he said maybe it was. And I was sure—after I looked at the car, I was sure it was. Mr. Schuster had driven it, and I'd been told—and it was a fact—that Mr. Schuster didn't believe it was the car. He thought the car had been destroyed, and this was a phony car someone had built up.

Then, fact, Garry Moore had a TV show years ago; I forget the name of it, but it was where they surprised people. Anyway, the surprise they cooked up was to have Mr. Schuster on the show and interview him—Mr. Schuster, the man that drove the car around the world. Then at the very end, pull up the curtain, and here would be the car, and Mr. Schuster—oh, wow! Wonderful! So they interviewed Mr. Schuster—he went in Siberia, the whole thing—160 days. Then Garry Moore probably pulled up the curtain, said, “There's the car you drove, Mr. Schuster.”

Mr. Schuster said, “That's not the car!” which [chuckles] ruined the show or caused a little excitement. So anyway, that's what we had to go on; he had said it wasn't the car.

So we got the car, and we got it to HAC. Ralph Dunwoodie, who was my car buyer and also researcher, who doesn't work there any more—he's on a retainer. He works part-time for us; he's a good friend. He really dug into the car, and we took it apart; and in the meantime, we'd met Mr. Schuster and talked to him, and he says [shakes head no], “It's not the car.”

Ralph had found a few things that were real interesting. So he told me about 'em, and I said, “Well, let's get Mr. Schuster out here to look at the car, and we'll talk to him and see if we can resolve this thing once and for all.” So Mr. Schuster and his—we called and wrote him. So there's a George, Jr. who's still alive—in fact, he's coming out next May—who was just wonderful to his father. But by then in '63, Mr. Schuster was in his nineties. And we called, and through George, Jr., we said, “Please come out,” and neither one of 'em were—George, Jr. was semi-retired, and of course, George, Sr. was retired. Said, “Please come out and look at the car. We'll pay all your expenses.” And Ralph Dunwoodie did all this, and by then he was a friend—he'd gone to

see him many times. "And come on out and meet Mr. Harrah and look at the car and go on back, and that's it. You know, it won't cost you a dime."

So okay, they were doing it. And it was interesting, as the day they arrived, I met 'em at the airport, it was the first jet flight into Reno. And it just happened; we didn't plan it that way. They happened to be on it, and then they made a little thing out of it. When he'd come through here before—or he hadn't come to Reno, but he, you know—in this old car, and it'd taken him—so many days; well, from New York, which is where they lived, to Nevada, it'd be forty days or fifty days or whatever. And then on this plane, the next time he came, was in five hours and fifty minutes, and he made a little thing out of it—what a thrill—.

But anyway, I met 'em at the airport, and here they came— and George, Sr. and George, Jr. George, Sr. is very tall, and George, Jr. was a little smaller than tall, and he's a typical German or Dutchman build—had big hands and round head and his ears kinda stuck out, and real cute little fella. But he came of f, and they met me—I met 'em—"How do you do?"—at the airport and shook hands. And he said, "Mr. Harrah—" in fact, that's in a book, I'll let you read. He said, "Mr. Harrah, this is awfully nice of you to bring us out here, but I'm sorry to say, that's not the car." [Laughs]

So I said, "Okay, okay." And they stayed—we didn't have a hotel then—they stayed at the Holiday. That's where we used to put people; it was the best hotel in town, we felt. And we got 'em a car, and we said, "Okay, and you rest up and have dinner, and we'll see you at the Collection at so-and-so." I guess Ralph picked 'em up the next morning and drove 'em out there. And they looked at the Collection, and they looked at the car, and then George (this is all in the story I'll give you) started taking the

car apart, and they did it together. So they got down and got down, and then Mr. Schuster was an old man, and he had to leave. Then I think he got a little sick or tired, so he stayed home one day, and then Ralph called him. "Mr. Schuster, can you come out tomorrow?" (And by then George, Jr. knew the way.) But said, "I found a couple of things that I think will interest you."

And so they went out the next day. In the meantime, Ralph had found a break in the frame that had been repaired real Mickey Mouse—you know, a piece of metal and just some nuts and bolts and, you know, just kinda makeshift, although it was strong, but it was not factory at all. He found that, and he found something in the clutch which I don't understand, but some clutch pins that had been pounded in. They were supposed to be screwed in, but it was real crude the way it had been done. He showed those two things to Mr. Schuster, and Mr. Schuster almost had a heart attack at the time— [startled, shaking] like that! And he said, "Those are repairs that I made in Siberia!" He said, "I did that frame," and he said where it was the frame broke, and he crawled in it—took him a half a day to piece it together. And then the clutch started slipping, and they had no parts, and the only way he could get the clutch to hold was to pound these pins in there somehow. So he was just—oh, he was so excited that that was it, that that was the car.

So then they had to go back, but he said, "That's the car." And fact, that's when he—I think it was that trip or maybe the next trip because they had to go back, and then they came back soon, within a few months, and he stayed here while we took the car apart. He stayed here several weeks, and we took it— and he, this and that, and "it should be this way," and "it should be that way," and with pictures and things, and kinda built up

a restoration manual—is what we call—how it should be.

But it was during that period that I had him to dinner in my home, and this was after—soon after—yeah, that must've been the first trip 'cause it was just a few days after he'd agreed it was the car that Ralph Dunwoodie'd showed him these repairs. So he came to dinner and then [George Jr.] had a little package under his arm, like this, you know. And people come to dinner, and they bring flowers or things sometimes, so I didn't—I thought, "Well, that's probably a little radiator ornament or something." I didn't pay too much attention. It was in a box, and it was a modern box, and if you looked at it closely, you could see where it had airmail stamps on it or something. But anyway, it was in that box. And they hadn't done anything to it because they received it that afternoon maybe at five o'clock, and the dinner was at six, so they just took it and brought it out.

But anyway, what it was, after Mr. Schuster won the race and there was a big trophy that went with the car and all (which we have), but that went to the company. And he won some money and all. But then when he got back to this little town he lived in in New York, his neighbors—and that was a very small community—his neighbors, who he knew very well, of course, they were very proud of him. "That's the man who won the—" So they had a dinner for him, a little local dinner. And the mayor or the town council or whatever—and there were speeches, and then they present him with this trophy. And it was engraved: "To our neighbor, George Schuster, that drove the car around the world. Congratulations"—and dated and all that. A little trophy about this tall [eight inches or so], a little silver trophy.

So anyway, after the dinner, he presented it to me. And he'd had it engraved on the other

side. He'd had his son call home and had it airmailed out, and I don't know if they had it engraved back there or in Reno, but on the other side of the trophy it was a continuation of the inscription on the other side. It said, "To George Schuster," da da da da da, and by his neighbors; then it said on the other side, it said, "To Bill Harrah, my good friend (or something like that), who found and restored the Thomas. I give this trophy for doing such a wonderful thing. George Schuster." And he presented it to me, and I'm kind of emotional, you know—I'll cry in a movie if it's moving—but I had tears in my eyes when he handed me that trophy. I just—it was a big thrill.

Then we kept in contact until he died because we became good friends. And he'd identified the car, so from a selfish standpoint I didn't really have to do any more. I'm not bragging, but I liked him and I liked George, Jr. and George, Jr.'s wife Mary, and they had a little—George and Mary had a little retarded child at their home there, and I'd go visit at least once a year. And it was George and Mary and George, Sr., and then George, Sr. lost his eyesight, and he lived several years blind. But he got along fine, and they would write a lot and keep in touch. And I'd go out, and he always knew me. He was very philosophical. His eyesight failed gradually, so it wasn't an instant thing, so he was pretty well adjusted to it. And we have a picture in the Collection of him driving the Thomas after it was restored. His eyesight was failing then, but he—and Ralph Dunwoodie's with him—and could see well enough—you know, that's a car and that's a post there, but he really couldn't see—but he drove the car. And I remember at the time he said that he felt one of the bearings was loose [laughing] or something! It ran pretty good! Quite a guy.

OKay. That's enough of the Thomas, I guess.

That's such a neat story.

Yeah, it is. It's quite a—one of a kind.

Oh, I'll tell you one funny one. Mr. Schuster was an old, old man, of course, when we were talkin', but he had quite a sense of humor and pretty down to earth. I asked him how it was driving, you know—just terrible; there were no roads or anything. So, "It was terrible, it was hell," he said, "but you know, you did it."

And I said, "Well, how was it in Russia?" And of course, Russia in our mind today is so primitive compared to the rest of it. I thought, well, how was it in Russia if it was terrible here, how was it in Russia? Well, of course, Russia was just the same; it was primitive here, it was primitive there. Fact, Russia was a good as anywhere. So I said, "How was Russia?"

And he said, "Well, the roads were as good as they were here."

And I said, "Well, where did you st[ay]—you know, you come here—you come to a town, like Tonopah, they had a hotel or somethin'. What did you do in Russia?"

And he said, "Well, you come to a little town, and maybe they'd have a little hotel or a little place where you can get a room." And he said, "You can get a meal, no trouble."

And I said, "Well gee, that's—wasn't too bad at that."

And he—"Well, it was no tougher in Russia than it was here."

And I forget how we got into it. I don't think I asked the question. But, "What were the Russian women like?"

He got a little twinkle in his eye, and he said [softly], "They were very, very friendly!" [Laughs] I think I laughed, and just said—I think George, Jr. was there at the time, and he looked kinda, you know, shocked—George, Jr. did. You know, you don't like to hear your dad talk that way. George, Sr.—he was so cute, and

he was in his nineties—he got this little grin, and he said, "They were very, very friendly."

See, they were in Moscow, and I got a description from George, Jr. and a book—there's this book where they were in Moscow. And by the book and George, Jr. and George, Sr.—he was gone then when I was in Moscow—but we pieced it all together and figured exactly where they were in Moscow. So we went there when we were in Moscow, and it has since changed. Part of the building is still standing; I took a picture of it. But the front had been modified and all like we did at Tonopah. I have a picture somewhere, but it's—you know, it's a city now, and it's all—really not much to go on. But I did go there.

That must've been fun to retrace the race.

Yeah, they've talked of rerunning it again, but [they] can't; it was a promotion, you know. They had their "around the world" race. But it was kinda phony. We talked about it before these promoters, and promoters got it. And they finally did it, but they only had one car when they did it, and it was just a hustle to make some money—aimed at us, I believe. But, at one time we'd talked about it, and many people had suggested it, and, "Why don't you do it again?" or "Why don't you run the car around the world again?" Someone wanted to make a movie of it that was serious about it.

And I said, "Well, the only way I'd do it—I wouldn't run the car around 'cause it's an old car, and it's been around. Why wear it out?" But I said, "If they wanted to do something like that, I would consider it, but I'd build another car"—which we could do. We have other Thomases and we have parts; you could make another one, and actually have a car that you could say is the "around the world" Thomas, or say it's an exact duplicate. And you could do it, but I don't—it's come up; it

may come up again. I would do it if there was money in it or something. To actually rerun it, the route and cars and all, would take so much time, I just wouldn't want to do it.

READING ABOUT CARS

What publications do you read and subscribe to?

Well, publications—there's ones that are of antique cars; there's those that are just ads—primarily ads. *Hemmings* [is] the leading one, and there's several others; I can't remember their names offhand. But there's I'd say, two others that are not near as large as *Hemmings* but are catching up quite fast. I skim through—I look for certain cars. But maybe twenty minutes to an hour or something. And then Ken Grosbeck, our buyer, he reads it quite thoroughly, and then we compare notes, and I have maybe two or three cars, and he usually has the same two or three, and maybe he's picked up one or two that I didn't 'cause he reads it more carefully than I do. But it's fun, and it is helpful. And in fact when *Hemmings* comes in at—we have it sent airmail, so we have a chance with the other collectors around the country—and when it comes in, I'm notified immediately, whether I'm at home or wherever I am—“The *Hemmings* is in; what do you want us to do with it?”

And it usually comes—as life is, as fate is, I'm in the middle of a board meeting or something like [chuckling]—I can't immediately look at it. But Once in a while I get lucky.

Then there's all the various car clubs—have publications or most of 'em do, I'd say. And they're either from monthly to bimonthly.

One of the car publications has gone from monthly—and it's an ad thing (I forget

the name of it—Old Cars, I believe)—and it, as I said, it was growing, and it's gone from a monthly to every two weeks, which *Hemmings* is still monthly, so there may be somethin' happening there.

But on the actual car clubs—they have their publications, which are mostly monthlies, and then there're some that are less. And then there's all the car clubs; there's the Antique Auto. (I think I mentioned that, didn't I?) In America the three leading antique car clubs—the older cars—is Antique Auto and the Veteran Car Club and the Horseless Carriage Club. And they go in different directions. The Antique Auto covers about everything from the very antiques to the later “Classics” even. Horseless Carriage Club was primarily the early cars. Lately they've gotten into the newer cars, but they're mostly the true “horseless carriages.” And then the Veteran Car Club is mostly—they change around a little bit, but they're mostly the later cars.

And there's a Classic Car Club, which is the leading club in the later car, the Classic cars. And that's quite a club; that's a good club. They have a wonderful publication.

And then there's the one-car clubs or one make. Well, there's Auburn-Cord-Duesenberg—they were all made by the same company; that's a publication and a club. There's the H. H. Franklin Club; that's Franklin cars, and they have a publication called the *Air-Cooled News*, which is about every two months. Then there's the Packard Club. Fact, there's several Packard clubs; I think there's three or four. There's a West Coast Packard Club, and there's a National and International; in fact, there's—I'm confused on the Packard clubs. Then there's the Cadillac-La Salle Club, and there's a Ford Model T Club, a Ford Model A Club, and a Ford V-S Club. And then there's two or three Chevrolet clubs, all of which have publications, and all of which I glance at.

The way I do is I read several of them at HAC, but mostly at night when I go from my office here to HAC usually, catch maybe an hour out there; and then when I leave there, if there's any new publications, I take 'em home with me, which is—and I don't check 'em out or anything; I just take them. And then I keep 'em until I'm finished, and I bring them back. And unfortunately, they go to Idaho, they go all over with me. So I get most of 'em back, but I don't get 'em all back. And say in a year I may take hundreds home, and I'll get all but one or two back. And we worked it out—in fact we worked it out without even talkin' about it, 'cause I know it kinda bugged the library a little bit, but there was no hint that I [should] change. But it's just the way I like to work, and then all of these can be—after a few months if they don't get it back, they'll occasionally ask me about one, and I'll look for it, and if I can't find it, then they write and they can get a duplicate. But it's so much easier for me to—. Usually by the time I get out there, I'm runnin' kinda late, and may have to go to the Lake or something; so it's so easy just to grab an armful and take off. And then I read 'em—as my wife says, the people ask—we've been interviewed lately quite a bit about our life, and she says, "What does he read?"

And she says, "Car books" [laughing].

And then in my interviews I've said that, that I do like to buy lots of books—the latest novels and the latest—and it's on the "Today" show, the new book on so-and-so; quite often I'll ask Cindy [Wade] to buy it. And about one out of four I'll read; the other three just sit around and other people read 'em, but I—Oh, gee, here's a new Classic car book; I gotta read it."

Then there are various publications—true book books—on cars, and they're just getting more and more all the time. Years ago—twenty, thirty years ago—there was hardly

anything on cars in magazines or books. And now it's just—I used to try to keep up on the books, and I can't even come close any more. They're just coming out, every month there's ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty new books on antique cars. So we buy, the library buys most of them that have any quality at all or are of interest, but I don't—I don't try to keep up on 'em. It's impossible.

There isn't a book club for antique cars?

Not that I know of. There's a museum (book] club; we belong to that. But they're—everything, you know. That covers the publications pretty good, doesn't it?

What do you especially look for in a publication?

Oh, there's ads, but they're—. The monthly magazines have ads which usually they're delayed, so they're not too good, but I read them, of course. I'd say every month, we'll pick up two or three ads that are of importance possibly. But they jump around, and they're very interesting (the magazines). They'll have articles—the history of a car company and maybe a company you never heard of and how it started and so on and so on, what they built, and then how they end it. And then there'll be articles on Packard or Franklin or Stutz or whatever. And it can be any period; it's just some car nut writes an article, and of course, they're like most publications, short of material all the time, so here it'll come. And some of 'em aren't very good. Most of 'em, the research done is really very well done. And then it's so much fun to find a mistake in one—huh! [chuckles]—point it out to them [laughs]. And of course, usually they've already heard from nine hundred other people. Once in a while, why, I can be the only one maybe or

one of the few to find it, and oh, that makes me feel so good.

And there's some things that are just indelibly in your head, and you just—and it sticks out. You know, you're reading the article, and here's the bore and stroke of a '22 Franklin, and I know exactly what it is; and if it's wrong, it just hits me. It's like it was red letters.

Have you tried writing for the magazines yourself?

No, I—a little, but I'm not a writer; I don't pretend to be. But I have written on request. Well, like our little local Horseless Carriage Club; it's called the Nevada Regional Group, and I was helpful in starting it. We have a publication, and years ago I used to write for that. I'd go on a tour and come back, and I'd write a little article, and others did too. And it wasn't very good, but it was as good as some and better than some and worse than most.

Then I wrote for, I think it was Classic Car magazine. They asked me to write—they were doin' an article on Marmon— sixteen-cylinder Marmon. And I had one restored that I'd driven, and they wanted a road report of it, which I wrote for them. And I actually wrote it myself; usually I'd get somebody else to do it, and then I'll play with it and make it sound like me. But this I actually wrote, and it was so funny. I said, "What do you want?"

And they said, "Well, your driving impression of a sixteen-cylinder Marmon." So I wrote a driving impression of a sixteen-cylinder Marmon, and I covered everything. But unfortunately, it was only about sixty words [chuckles], and what they wanted was three or four hundred [laughs]. And I sent it in, and of course, they were on a deadline, and they called me up all frantic, and, "My God, we got this much space for you, and it's only sixty words!"

And I said, "Well, I told the whole story." So they—"What are we gonna do?"

I said, "Well, I'm—" and I was doin' other things. I said, "Gee, I don't have time to mess with that." I said, "You do it!" So they embellished it a little and stretched it so it filled their space they had. It was very uninteresting the way I wrote it, but it was true. It told the acceleration and the top speed and the cornering and the stopping and the noise level and everything that mattered I could think of. Huh! Maybe eighty words [chuckles].

Have you thought of putting out a publication from the Collection?

Oh, a little bit. We've kicked it around, but we're runnin' late out there, and we have all kinds of problems—mostly budgetary. Although we're twenty years old or so out there, we're still in the beginning, and we just haven't got around to that yet. Lord Montagu in Britain has a collection, and he has a publishing company, and he does quite well with it. I don't know financially, but they put out a monthly magazine that's done very well, and of course, he had editors and things. And then they publish books from time to time, and they do very well with it. We just haven't got into that yet. I don't know how far we—we don't want to actually get into that—'cause his background is that. Like my background, the business is casino business and his is more or less books and article that—more of an author type. So when he got into cars, why, the other came very naturally for him. And I'd say just from my opinion—I've never talked to anyone else on it, but from what I've seen on his stuff, it's just pretty good. The books, the articles are always quite good, and he has several very competent people on his staff. And then the books are usually just published

(they're written by someone else), but they're on the average quite good—very timely, or very, you know, good—good material or good subject. But he does a good job. And of course, I can read it [laughs].

Isn't there a series of kind of technical journals in the automobile industry? Do you read those, too?

Yeah, a little, but not too much. We subscribe to those, of course. And also I—something I'm kinda proud of—I belong to the Society of Automobile Engineers, which is—I don't know if it's prestigious, but it's not something you just fill out a thing and get in. You have to submit, and you have to be submitted by someone, and they vote on you. My cousin Duke Harrah, who's gone now—he was a lot older than I am, but quite an engineer type. He was more into airplanes, but he was into cars for years, and very mechanical. He had Cords, and he had interesting cars. And we became very close friends. He lived in Michigan. But he submitted my name—he asked my permission first. He said, “Can I submit your name for admission to the Society of Automobile Engineers?”

And I said, “Well, yeah. But why?”

He sold parts for the manufacturers. He said, “I don't know anybody in the industry, or outside the industry, that's more qualified than you are.”

And I says, “Huh? I can't, you know design a gear.”

And he said, “Yeah, but you understand what makes the gear go round and so on and so on.” He said, “Your overall background.”

So anyway, he did, and he wrote a thing, unbelievable, on me that he submitted with the application, why I should be a member—that was necessary. And it almost made me cry, it was so flowery, and it maybe could've

been true, but it was kinda like a cousin that liked his cousin sort of thing. But it was extremely well done, and it wasn't just somethin' he dashed off; it was somethin' he spent a lot of time at. So it was quite a thrill to me, and I was accepted. My background didn't fit because they're engineers, and ninety-nine percent of 'em work for General Motors, or they work for so-and-so and so-and-so. And me being entirely independent and all—. But anyway, I'm proud of it, and I have a membership thing on the wall of my office.

But they publicize something; I mean they have a publication. And then there are others that we subscribe to, but most of 'em are very dry, very technical, and very “” sort of a thing that really doesn't apply to my primary interest, although I am interested in modern cars. But the technicalities of rear ends of lower-priced General Motors cars or something and things like that—more from a manufacturer's standpoint, which really has no interest to me. But I look at them, too; I look at the covers and maybe the index to see if there's anything. I read quite a bit. And fortunately, I do read most of 'em, and I read fast, and I do go through the index and—so it is kinda fun. I don't do it for that reason, but like I go to my board meeting in Cleveland, and somebody'll say, “Oh, did you see the article on De Soto in the so-and-so?” And I did see it and I did read it, and it kinda gives me a good feeling.

How do you feel that your library is on holdings, then? Is Mr. [Mike] Moore a good collector?

Yeah, yeah, he does a good job. I don't know—I don't work closely with him, but I never run into anything there that disappoints me. And I don't tell him what to subscribe to and what not to subscribe to. And as I said,

there're so many now that we just can't take 'em all. But they just go on reasonable judgment, I think, 'cause I never ask for anything that we don't have. And where they put 'em all I don't know 'cause it's [laughs]—and I don't want to think about it [laughing]; that's their problem!

What's the situation with historic car books there? Have they made an attempt to collect the things that are in the period of the cars?

Oh yeah. Well, the period of cars—yeah, we have fine—we're I think as good as anybody. The Detroit library is supposed to have a lot of stuff, but I'm not too familiar with it. But next to them—well, I don't know what they have, but we have about everything. And we compare notes with other collectors on the very early trade journals. I'd say that ours are ninety-nine point nine percent [99.9%] complete, and that's starting in the 1890s. Or maybe we're complete now—I don't know, but I know we keep picking them up and swapping and all. And that stuff is just invaluable—when you start on a 1904 So-and-so, and there you have the factory ad and a description of the car and the announcement of the car—and it's all there and just—there it is, in 1904. And that's the trouble with some articles written today; the writer can make a mistake, or he may be thinkin' a little different over the years, that he likes the So-and-so better than the Such-and-such, and so writing is, you know, slanted possibly. But the original—there it is.

What kind of goals do you have for that library now?

I haven't talked to them on it, but as far as I'm concerned, it's quite adequate, and just keep up, and fine. Yeah. I'm real pleased. As far as I'm concerned, our library's done, except

for possibly ones we miss, and then just keep up the new Motor Trend and all, and we have them all. And the modern magazines pretty soon become antique. Like I resubscribed to Motor Trend since it started and, the others, Road and Track, but they've been out ten, twenty years now.

Coming back to the Collection, you mentioned briefly about your library at the Collection. What does it amount to besides the manuals on restoration and operation and histories of the industry and so forth? Do you try, for example, to do oral histories of the restoration process, the head guy who's in charge of a restoration? Does he tape his activities or anything like that?

No, we're gonna photograph one this year before our I-80 project. We're going to photograph a restoration, and then there'll be comment on that, but it'll be—you can go in—here's how a car was restored and sit down, and here's a picture, picture, picture, picture, picture.

You don't do that with every car, then?

Oh, no. No, all we need is one car—that's how a car's restored, da da da da da.

We do have a few oral histories—not exactly oral histories, but we do have some—like Mr. Schuster, the man that drove the car around the world. I think it's Antique Auto Club in conjunction with (that's in Pennsylvania) some university there. I should know it—Penn State or University of Pennsylvania, something. They got an oral history from him, which was excellent. I was there one year; I had the Thomas there. And he and I—part of it was, they had a camera, yeah, they must have 'cause we sat in the Thomas, and it was kinda cold. And we talked to each other, and they taped it. We have a

copy of that. Like I think I told you, I saw him many times, and every time he'd tell me about the trip, and every time there'd be something added that I didn't know before.

Do you try to collect music about cars? You know, old sheet music?

We have "My Merry Oldsmobile," and there's a surprising number—they're on display at the Collection. But there must be fifteen or twenty, you know—"Ride with Me in My Reo" and on and on. "Oldsmobile" caught on 'cause it had a pretty neat melody. But there're some real dumb songs. And we have a good collection of them, yeah.

Do you have any favorites or anything among those?

No, not really. No. They're all pretty bad! [Chuckles]

They don't really describe automobiles, do you think?

Oh, they're all right, but some of 'em are really ridiculous. You can see the car company came first and hired somebody and said, "Please write a song about a Stutz," or somethin'. And it just doesn't rhyme, it doesn't do anything. "Oldsmobile" has a nice little melody to it.

Do you see a lot of researchers in your library, and do you try to attract people on an educational basis there?

No. We do permit people to come in, and we're set up for that, but we don't go out of our way. But if people want to come in and use, they have to make arrangements, and we're kinda particular who it is. And we do

quite a bit of research— or quite a bit—I'd say several a day, possibly. (Well, that's the last time I looked, and I'm sure it's more now.) We advertise, and it is knowledge you can write in; and you have a nineteen-somethin'-or-other, and we'll give you what we can on the car, for a fee, of course. That was my idea, I think. It's to help the collector that has only one car or a few cars and has difficulty—maybe isn't near a library.

Of course, it's wonderful to get a photostat of the brochure on your car that's very thrilling. We charge enough so we make a little on it; we don't lose anything, and we don't break even. We make a couple of dollars, why not, you know?

That's been a problem a little out there, to get 'em profit-minded, 'cause it does—you know, it's lost a lot of money, costs a lot of money to operate it. And to get to thinking out there—the thinking is like on the library—oh, let's don't charge anybody anything. Admission for years was fifty cents, and I got it to a dollar, and then I got it to two dollars, and—oh no, oh no! And there's still a little of that out there; I don't know why. And I said, "Don't rip off the public, but charge—you're providing a service, why that's it." So, it's still a little problem out there, but it's gettin' better; it's a lot better than it was.

Your typical researcher is not a scholarly type; he's more likely to be a collector, isn't that right? And you don't ordinarily see an engineering historian or something like that, do you?

Well, an engineering major will come out and maybe want to use it for a thesis or something, which we permit, but it has to be right, you know. Then occasionally a fella wants to take over or somethin'. His thesis is, you know, the only thing in the world going on at that time, and there are, you know— but [if] they do it right, why, we welcome 'em.

What do you do about collecting theses in this area? Do you try to encourage them to give you copies of their theses or dissertations after they do this?

Oh, yeah, yeah. Not because they did it there, just you know, if it is of interest to us. And sometimes they get off in another direction, which is quite, you know, their thing. Well, it's of no value to us, so just the fact that it was done there, you know. Doesn't mean anything to me. I mean it's nice, but it's a funny thing to collect—you know, you have to be a little choosy, and like I said, I don't even want to think about that library 'cause I was real close to it for years, and we ran out of space then, so (laughing) what they've done in the last twelve years I just don't want to think!

Do you think about the educational values in the Collection?

Well, yeah, I don't know if I mentioned it directly, but outside of the fun side of it, that's probably the principal reason for the Collection, the story it tells and the different—the engineering—just the—and beauty and so on, but the different ways they did things. And it's all right there; it's just spelled out. You can see the pictures in the books and the original factory ad, like I said, but to actually see the car sitting there to me is so far ahead of all the rest. And that's the real reason for the whole thing—is there's your history right there in front of you. That plus the literature, why you—I don't know how you could explain it more clearly than the literature and the actual object.

What kinds of contacts do you make with schools of engineering across the country or locally that have to do with the car collection specifically?

Oh, we don't go out of our way at all. It's a one-way thing, I'd guess you'd say, 'cause like I said, we're running—and I don't know if we weren't running late, but you know, we're there, people know we're there, and if they want, if we can help 'em, we want to do it. But to go to them and try to promote something or offer something, why, that doesn't make too much sense to me because they know we're there, and if they want us, fine. And I think any aware observer would know that we have the facilities, so we don't have to go out to advertise it or publicize it. And then usually most articles on the Collection will mention the library sooner or later. Anybody that has enough interest to read the article'll pick up that it's there and that it's not unapproachable at all.

The library's a lot of fun; I don't know if I told you, but I used to go out there a lot at night before I had any kids or anything. And right now I know what time it is within five minutes. But I'd get out there and I'd lose all track of time. [I'd] think it'd be ten o'clock, and it'd be midnight many times. Just I could be looking at the cars and in the library gettin' involved, and then you go from this, and pretty soon I have a stack of books like that [three feet].

And it's so much fun in researches, as you no doubt know better than I do. You're looking for something and you're not sure, and then when you find it and it is the way you hoped it was, why then—wow! [Laughs] Or maybe you've had a discussion or almost an argument with somebody, and then you go check it out and find you were right and they were wrong, and there it is! [jabs finger]

SOME AUTOMOBILE MUSEUMS IN THE U.S.A

I'd like to see you reliving some of your trips to museums.

Well, there's one down by Long Beach, Newport. I don't know exactly where it is. It's in that area. And it's interesting in that it's a private—well, it's not private; it's open to the public. It's Briggs Cunningham, who's from the east coast in Rhode Island (somethin'), kind of social, very wealthy, and he was a sports car racer. And the interesting thing, he has some real interesting cars; you know, Mercers and Duesenbergs and sixteen-cylinder Cadillacs, all interesting cars. But the interesting thing, he's a wealthy sportsman, and he's about my age, and he always had money, he always liked cars. So he bought a lot of wonderful cars, and he still has 'em. The cars in the museum are cars that he bought new. Like the Mercer's one he had when he was a kid, and the Duesenberg is one he bought new. Fact, he even built some cars for a while, called the Cunningham. It was a sports car with a Chrysler engine, which he raced in Le Mans, France for years. He never won it, but he came in third a couple of times. So he built this road car called the Cunningham, very beautiful sports car. This was in the '50s. We have one in our museum. And we're good friends; we correspond, and I see him at Pebble Beach, and I know his wife. We're old friends.

Then there's a Jack Nethercutt in Sylmar, California. [After we bought his collection], then he started over and has duplicated every car that he sold me and I think he has about fifty cars, but every one is a gem. It's absolutely perfect and picked just specifically to represent some, you know—it's a wonderful collection. And it's in a special building that he built, and God knows, the building had to cost ten million dollars. And it's right next to his offices of Merle Norman. But it's about a four-story building, and he has an apartment on top, and the apartment is double stories, you know, like thirty-foot ceilings and marble and on and on and—. And the room where

he has the cars displayed is just the most beautiful thing—which we're gonna copy that, too, for some of ours. It's a high-ceiling room with marble and carpet and so on, so on. And here's about thirty cars, Duesenbergs and things, so it just is beautiful. It's a private museum, but he does have tours. You know, you can write in and say, "Our group will be there on June fifteenth," and he will usually give permission to come in. He also has a wonderful collection of organs and all kinds of mechanical music machines that he's restored. He's a real interesting fella. We're close friends.

Oh, there're so many—try to pick out the big ones.

There's one in Denver, isn't there?

Yeah, Arthur Rippey. He's a man I know. We were kinda enemies for a while 'cause we got in a political fracas over the Horseless Carriage Club, but we defeated him. And then since then, we've become friends. His collection doesn't amount to an awful lot. And he's in it kinda commercially; he buys and sells. But he's a good guy; we're good friends.

But there's one in Cleveland, Ohio; it's called the Western Reserve—somethin' (I'll have to get you the name). But it was originally Thompson Products (I don't know if you've ever heard of them). They made parts for cars, and they still do. And the man that started that is [Fred Crawford].

Anyway, they have a car museum, as they make parts for cars in Cleveland. And it didn't amount to much. And then this fella [Fred Crawford], he was the instigator of it, started it, and it was just a bunch of cars. Then they got a fairly good building. I've kept track over the years.

Then I had an assistant out here called Ken Gooding, who was real good. He started with me, and I'd known him from L.A. when

he was fourteen years old or something, and now he's in his early thirties. But when he was fourteen, he knew an awful lot about cars; and when he was sixteen, he knew a lot more. So when he was about eighteen or nineteen, he wrote me a letter and wanted to know if he could come to work, which he did. And just goofy over cars—old cars—and he knew a lot about 'em, and studied 'em and read up on 'em. And so eventually he wound up as my assistant at HAC. And he got promoted and all, and he was a little headstrong, but he was okay.

Then it just got to the point where you could feel he was just gettin' too big for his job. And we didn't have anything more at HAC for him; the next job would've been manager, and that was filled quite satisfactorily. So it was no secret he was lookin'. So [Fred Crawford] called me, and he said that Ken had applied back there as a curator, or whatever; what did I think of him?

And I said—I told it just the way it was. I said, "He knows cars backwards and forwards, he'll work sixteen hours a day, and he's just a little headstrong. And he gets somethin' all set, and then presents it to you all excited, and if you say, 'Well, maybe not,' why that's a big comedown." And I said, "He's young. He's—" I said, "He had more pluses than minuses, but those are the two—you should keep a little rein on him."

He said, "Do you recommend him for the manager here?"

And I said, "Oh, yeah, he can handle that all right."

So he went back there. And he's done a wonderful job; he's hopped it up, he's increased the board of directors, and he's got people from all over the country on the board—car people. In fact, I'm on the board. I've been on there a year. I did it—well, not because of him, but just there's so many good car people on the

board (and we meet every three months) that it's fun to go to the meeting, to compare notes with what's goin' on. And you have a nice lunch; you have a meeting and a nice lunch, and "See you later." I think there's twenty on the board, which is more than they need; most of 'em are honorary.

But that museum has some rare cars; they have mostly cars built in Cleveland, and they started in that direction. There were a lot of cars made in Cleveland. There aren't any any more, but there were quite a few in the early days. So they have many of those. And they have one, Peerless, which was built in Cleveland. And Peerless were a very high-quality car; we have several in the museum—it's no big deal. It was expensive, mostly V-8s in the '20s and '50s. But they have a sixteen-cylinder Peerless, which is the only one in the world. We have sixteen-cylinder Marmons and sixteen-cylinder Cadillacs—they got the production. But the sixteen-cylinder Peerless, they built one, and then the company was in bad shape, and they just never built another one. And it's theirs. That's an extremely rare car.

But anyway, since Ken's been there, he's weeded out a lot of old stuff. As they're a nonprofit place there, they get a lot of gifts, like at every meeting or something, there's a gift of a Cadillac, and there's a gift of this and a gift of that, and so of course, they move right along. And people get tax deductions for them. We can't very well do it because for us to give it, why—like a museum piece, we're gonna give 'em a little Jeep or something for a few thousand dollars. But we can't get in the big money like—well, Jack Nethercutt recently joined the board, and he gave them a Mercedes valued at two hundred thousand dollars. But as an individual, or the only stockholder of Merle Norman, he can do that. But we can't—as we have other stockholders,

in effect it would be hurting their investment if we give somethin' away, right? But we are gonna give 'em a Jeep or somethin'.

But I do enjoy the board and the museum, although they're crowded for space, although they've acquired land around and tore some buildings down. So they're goin'—it's gonna be a great museum. And they do have an excellent selection of cars. And Ken—boy, he works every day. There's car meets or shows, and like, you have heard of Pebble Beach. That's one of the best in the country. Well, they've never had one like that in Cleveland. So Ken got the idea—Ken and a good friend of mine, Tom Lester, who's from Cleveland, a car fella, had the idea of puttin' one on in this museum, which they're doing this year. It's gonna be a real exclusive car meet. It's by invitation only, and they hope to have eighty to a hundred of the best cars in the country. And I'm the grand marshal of the affair. And the reason for that was just to help 'em; you know, I don't like that sort of thing, but it's no trouble; I don't do any work. And the fact it's Cleveland—they know a lot of people there and in the East—but by my being on the board, they thought they could get some cars from out here. That'll be in June.

It must be kind of satisfying to see one of your protégés turning out there.

Yeah, oh yeah. We're good friends, we really are. I know his faults, and he knows I know his faults. And he'll come up at me, and I'll come chargin' up, and I know every word he's gonna—, you know, all his moves [laughing]. So he'll come up, up, up, up, and I'll just look at him. And he'll say, "Oh, I forgot, Bill—you know all that!" [Laughs] "So I'll come at you from another way." But usually his requests are reasonable. You know, he thinks 'em out now, instead of just goin'

off headstrong. So he's doin' real good. I like Ken.

And he's a one, you know, he knows a lot, and he's a little conceited, maybe. So it's so much fun with him to find somethin' wrong with one of his cars, which I usually can do. [Laughs] I'll wait until there's a—see, after the meeting, we have—they have a little bar there, and you have a drink and we have lunch and all. So if I see somethin' wrong, then I'll wait until there's a gang—and they're all car people, or most of 'em. If there's a bunch of 'em around, I'll say, "Hey, Ken! Come here! Hey, the hubcap"—or "the speedometer—" That's fun.

This old fella I'm tryin' to think of, he's still on the board there. And he's semi-retired from the company, although I guess he's on the board of directors of the main company—it's Thompson (Something) Wooleridge. I think he's in his nineties. And he's hard of hearing, but his mind's sharp as a tack. And he comes into the meeting and sits down, and here we go!—da da da. He usually has a joke to tell, a little off color, not too bad. But what's cute about it, he tells 'em very well, and it's a story you've never heard before. So many jokes you've heard, you know. He started the company, and, you know—twenty-three or somethin'.

Fred Crawford, he started the thing just like—well, all of a start. The company was goin' pretty good, so he had salesmen all over the country selling these, you know, brake shoes and springs and things. So he'd say, "Well, whenever you go in a place to sell, ask 'em if there's any old cars around there anywhere." So when his salesmen'd come back, he'd have various leads; and I guess this was in the '20s and early '30s when the cars were twenty-five and fifty dollars, so he did real well. And he tells a lot of those stories.

There must be some particular characteristic that all of these people who really love old cars have.

Oh, I don't know. I mean we all love 'em, but to line us up, we're tall and short, and fat and thin, and sober and drunk, and churchgoing and non-churchgoing, and single and married with ten kids—. There's nothin' that I can see that is the uniform trait, except the interest in the cars. And then there's different depths; like some like the cars, but they're actually dealers. But still they like—you know, you can say he's a dealer, but he always has fifteen cars, and he drives 'em and works on 'em; but then next time you see him, he has maybe a different fifteen cars. And he makes money as he switches around. He's also an attorney, or he's also a stockbroker, or you know—that isn't his principal profession—realtor, or something.

But you may have heard me say it, and it is a pretty good—a “car guy”—I mean that's a very descriptive phrase. Like I'll ask Bud Catlett, or I'll ask Ralph Dunwoodie, or, you know—“Here's a new guy.” And, “Is he a car guy?” And by that, it means, is he really interested, or is he a fast-buck guy that's just in it for a dollar. Or is he—and quite often you run into those—it's a person with quite a bit of money, or has just made a lot of money, and all of a sudden, “Oh, gee, I want to get into old cars.” So they'll come along, and they don't know what they're doing, which is no disgrace to that, but nine times out of ten, they'll buy three or four and this and that and show up at the meet and all, and you know. And then the next year, and then the next year, and then maybe the cars are for sale and they're into yachts or something. So they're not true car people; they're just—they saw it on TV or somethin', so, “Oh, gee! Let's get one of those!” And especially when they

just acquired a lot of money, and where a Duesenberg's two hundred thousand, they'd love to go buy a Duesenberg for two hundred thousand dollars.

But the real car people are just—and it's in 'em, and most of 'em my age, I find that their interest was like mine, started when they were a child. Although Jack Nethercutt didn't. He's a couple of years younger than I am, and I think he was thirty before he got into cars, or maybe forty. But he's a true enthusiast, quite a pioneer, too—in restoring, he's real good and building the showroom and trailers he builds, and things.

EUROPEAN COLLECTIONS

Will you tell about the car collections and collectors outside the United States?

Okay, there's one in England; it's owned by Lord Montagu, who is an English lord. He's about fifty, I guess. And he really knows his cars. And he has an ancestral castle where the collection is. It's called Beaulieu, and it's south of London about, oh, eighty miles, I guess. And he just started (I've been there many times) next to the castle; he just had some sheds and things. And he's quite a hustler. And in England, of course, it's very difficult to do anything; if you think we have problems in this country with taxes and things, why, you should take a look at England. But he did want to build a museum building, and by getting it—how did he do that? He still owns it, but it's kinda public in a way. And there's some department or something that he got in with that— And anyway, it's quite an interesting building; it's multilevel, which is interesting; it isn't just a bunch of cars lined up side by side—which we're gonna copy many of those ideas at our new facility. But it's done quite well. But he had to even—his little

town there, which he's the head cheese, which is Beaulieu—he had to get permission of the town council or whatever, to build it. Then he had to get permission from this and that. And in England, if you're building something, the federal government or whatever it is has the power to just tell you no if they don't think it's a good idea.

Like he had the museum there, and then he wanted to put one up north of London. Because it's so difficult to travel over there—there's no freeways to speak of, so it's, you know—fifty miles is an hour and a half sometimes. But he was gonna build another museum north of London, which he did, but he was restricted as to size and so on and so on. And so I think he ran it a year or so, and then he just abandoned it because he couldn't enlarge it, he couldn't do this, he couldn't do that, he couldn't do that.

But he has a good collection, some interesting cars. And as I said, we're good friends; we've loaned him a car from time to time to show in his museum. And we see him every year on the Brighton Run; he always has a car in there. And then afterwards, he gives a cocktail party in Brighton. We usually go to that.

And oh, one interesting sidelight is that he is a lord, which is hereditary (you know, there're two kinds); he inherited his title. But I was in London one time, and he called me up and wanted to have lunch. "Fine."

And he said, "Where would you like to go?"

And I said, "I don't care. You're the host."

And he said, "How about the House of Lords?"

And then I said, "Well! Okay!" So we went there, and it was so exciting. It's like having lunch with your Senator in Washington, D.C., where they eat back there. Only this was more exciting because as we sat in the restaurant

there—and as you know, any prime minister automatically belongs to the House of Lords, and ex-prime ministers. And at that time, they'd had a lot of changes in the government; you know, every couple of years they had a new one. And they were all there, having lunch! And it was just like seeing a movie of English history, and I'm like Joe Tourist. I said (gestures pointing), "Oh, there's So-and-so! Oh!" You know, I didn't really point. And he got a big kick out of that.

lie said, "Well, of course, of course! That's—"

"Well, there's—I And there's—I And oh, look—!" And sittin' right over here is So-and-so, and it was just four or five or six or eight that I recognized instantly, and it was very exciting.

And they were in session, so right after lunch, he said, "I should go in and make an appearance," 'cause they check you out, I guess. You don't have to go every day, but I guess you have to go once a week or once a month. And I guess he hadn't been in too well. So he said, "I won't be long." He said, "I'll just go in and sit in my seat till they notice me, and then I'll go out." And he took me up, and they have a little balcony there, and he put me right up where I could see real good. And here they all are—. And he went down and slid into his seat. And he said, "Just watch me; when I leave, then you leave." So he was there maybe twenty minutes. And I think he jumped up and objected to somethin', so they knew [chuckles] he was there. And then he slid out, and away we went. So it was quite an experience.

How about going into a little more detail on that one? What cars does he specialize in? Which ones do you like the best? And you said that you trade a car with him or loan him a car now and then. Does he do the same for you?

No, it's very difficult to get cars out of England. Well, see, it's no expense to us because we send a car for the Brighton Run. And the way we work it—we finally gave it up, but we did it three or four times. We take the car on the run, and then we take it to his museum, and it would be on display. And then the following year when we took a car over, we'd bring the other one back. So we had a car in England all the time. They have some strict laws there about leaving a car over a year. If you leave a car over a year, you're in all kinds of trouble. And the reason for that is selling modern cars over there, I guess. But it also applied to the antique cars. But they're modifying that now. But it got so complicated—we had to get it out right on the exact date or pay a terrible tax—that we finally just abandoned the idea. I think when the law is changed, then we'll probably do it again because it didn't hurt us at all, and he has a tremendous number of visitors—five, six hundred thousand people a year, where we only have three hundred and some out here. And then he has a sign there, you know—Harrah's Museum da da da da, which was very good advertising.

But outstanding cars—well, he has some (I guess I should've read up on that, but I can remember pretty good)—he has many outstanding British racing cars, like there were Seagrave and other Englishmen. In fact, for many years the Englishmen held the land speed record; you know, two hundred miles an hour, three hundred miles an hour, four hundred miles an hour. And I think he has four or five of those. I think he has every one. And of course, as he is kind of a nonprofit thing in a way, he can get a lot of this stuff on donation and that sort of thing. He has a lot of just ordinary run-of-the-mill, but a good cross section of British cars. But like we have a better Rolls Royce collection than he does. But

he is really outstanding in these land speed cars. I'd say there's around 150-200 cars there.

And then (gee, there's a lot of 'em over there) the next one comes to mind is in Italy. And that's the first modern museum—well, that's in—(oh, what is that town? I always have trouble with that. I'll cheat a little [consults book].) You know, there are some names that just won't come to mind. And I can tell you the population and—Turin (or Torino). And that's the center of the automobile manufacturing in Italy. That's where Fiat is. Of course, they make most of the cars, but there's many other builders there. And that's where they have the auto show—the motor show every year. Of course, Fiat was the big bug for years; they made eighty-nine percent of the cars in Italy, and they could afford to do things like that. And I think they were responsible—this modern, brand-new car museum was built in Torino, which is where it should be. We should have one in Detroit here. And it's modern, brick, and very architecturally beautiful. I was so thrilled because I saw it ten, fifteen years ago. And prior to that, every car museum I'd been in was some old barn that someone had switched around, you know. This was the first modern—they have several hundred cars there. They're mostly Italian, of course.

It's owned by the Automobile Association or somethin'. They're just—it's just there. It's not done too well. The building is wonderful, but the displays aren't too good. It's like the Henry Ford Museum in Greenfield Village used to be. They've now corrected it. But they [Ford] had the beautiful building and the cars, but they just looked like the person that put 'em in there hated cars 'cause they were just jammed in and not displayed good and things wrong with every car. And Torino is similar to that; the cars are just lined up and there are a few little things that could be corrected with a little trouble.

The real exciting one in Europe is the Schlumpf Collection. And that is a real exciting story. I call 'em the Katzenjammer Kids; they were two brothers, Hans and Fritz Schlumpf. And Fritz is the younger brother, but he's the boss of the two. And they were in textile manufacturing. Oh, it's France (can't remember the name of the city). It's right over the border from Switzerland. And that's where their factories were, and they were extremely successful—made a lot of money. And Hans had an obsession for collecting cars, primarily Bugattis. And he just spent millions on it.

And then the mills, the textile mills, got in trouble financially, and I think primarily because of, well, the modern fabrics, where they didn't use wool any more, plus the Japanese competition. So they just finally went out of business, and that was a few years ago. And he collected all these cars, and he built a museum right in part of one of the factories and spent millions.

Well, anyway, I'd heard about it, of course, because he tried to buy the Bugatti Royale—it's a big huge car; there's only six of 'em in the world. We have two of them, and he'd bought one; I just missed it, and he bought it. And that's when I first learned about him. Then he tried to buy my Royales. And he'd write me a letter about once a year, and "Mr. Harrah, please set a price on one of your Royales."

And I said, "Well, I don't want to sell it."

Then he would make offers, and they were—well, he'd say, "I'll give you five thousand dollars more than you paid for it."

"No .

"I'll give you ten thousand more than you paid for it."

"No."

And so it got to be kind of a joke. And I knew he had a collection, but it was a big mystery. Nobody'd ever seen the collection.

And they knew he was buying—like there was one fella had a Bugatti collection in the Middle West, and I was interested in that. There were thirty or forty Bugattis. I was interested in one or two and was tryin' to buy 'em, and he said, "Yes, but I have a chance to sell the whole—" My price was okay on the two, but he said, "I have a chance to sell the whole bunch."

And I said, "Well, I'm not interested." I thought he was bluffin', and all of a sudden Schlumpf bought the whole collection, shipped it back there.

So I'd heard about it. Then I read somewhere that he was gonna open his museum finally; this was about two years ago in October. This was just when the trouble was coming, although I didn't know about the trouble with the mills. And I knew he was a wealthy man.

So I wrote him (you know, we corresponded before I wrote him) and said, "I see where your museum is gonna open November the twelfth (or something) . I would like to be there."

And I got a letter back, and, "Fine, wonderful." This was maybe March.

And then that's when the trouble started. So then I got a telegram (this is maybe September, October)—"Please do not come. And it was not clear. So then we called or wired back and couldn't get an answer. And then we finally found out that the thing is in bad financial trouble, and things were—."

So then we were approached by a couple of men in this town—it's Mulhouse, France. But we got a message from a couple of entrepreneurs or young hustlers, kinda, that they had an in with Schlumpf and that the museum might be for sale, and were we interested? And of course, we said yes, and of course, bartered with them and talked to them, and I sent a fella over there. And he

couldn't get in to see the cars because the unions had just about taken over there. They were picketing and so on and so on.

Then later I was over there, and I went by, and I met Schlumpf—an extremely interesting man, extremely [chuckles] egotistical. And we had lunch and all and talked, and it was substantially to buy the collection, because he was in deep trouble.

So then I wanted to see them, and, "Yes, you can see them," "No, you can't." And he didn't have the power; it was others. And we didn't know till the last minute. In fact, we actually went out there, and we didn't know if we were gonna get in or not. And then all of a sudden we got in. And talk about one of the most exciting days of my life, was to go in there and look at this! And they were lined up; see, he was about ready to open, and they were placed here, and they were placed there. And we went through and just lookin' and writin' and discussing, and it was really exciting. Some extremely rare, early cars, many of which I'd never even heard of. Within this Bugatti collection there had to be a hundred and fifty Bugattis. And he had two Royales and some real interesting ones, but the surprising thing, he had many duplicates. And it just looked like he just wanted to buy all the Bugattis in the world. We have ten or fifteen, maybe eighteen Bugattis. We have two Royales, but the rest are all different models and different body styles. But he would actually have five identical Bugattis—well, one model I especially noticed 'cause we took one to Pebble Beach .a year or so ago—sitting side by side. And then the 35-B, which is the most famous and popular Bugatti model; that was a race car that you could also drive on the highway. And we have one, which we're really happy with, and he must've had thirty-three 35-Bs, side by side, and all blue, all just identical. It just didn't make sense, except

he just wanted to own all the Bugattis in the world.

But it was as I said, one of the most exciting days of my life. And we kept working on it. Then [when] the unions got in there, they took over the place. Although it wasn't legal, they just took it over by just strength and guns and pushin' people out. And they didn't shoot anybody, but—. And he lost because he was in some legal problem. And this Mulhouse is right on the border to Switzerland, just a couple of miles. So he lived in Switzerland; that's where I met him. And then you'd say, "Hi," "Good-bye," and drive five miles and you'd be at the museum.

So he and his brother stay in Switzerland until somethin' is decided on it. Well, it looked for a while there like France was going Communist or awful close in the last election. And if it did, then they were really gonna take it over. So the reason they were allowed to stay in there—although it wasn't quite legal—everyone was just waiting until the election to see who was gonna run things.

Well, fortunately for France, and the world maybe, and for us possibly, why the Left didn't get in and the Right is still in there. [Giscard] d'Estaing and his government—they lost a few seats, but it's still a Right government, which blows up the unions. So we've reopened the door; we don't have anything going there yet, but we expect to maybe continue with possible acquisition in part or maybe all of the museum. And if we could get it all (we've made offers on it, but we already have a list of what we've wanted and what we could sell), but possibly if we could buy it right—and we're about the only people in the world that could buy it, and that would buy it, and because we have the money, plus we know what we're doing— and like we bought the Rockefeller Collection, which was the board of directors' action. But at the time I got

permission from the board to pay a million dollars for the Rockefeller Collection, I said, “We can—” (I think there were sixty, seventy cars), I said, “We can buy the sixty or seventy cars and bring ‘em to Reno, pay a million dollars, and sell probably thirty or forty cars that we already have for just about enough to pay for the whole thing.” I estimated it, and it was just luck ‘cause you can’t figure that close. I estimated we’d take in at an auction seven hundred and fifty to eight [hundred] thousand dollars for a million-dollar investment, and which is just about exactly what we did.

So we got maybe half a million, six hundred thousand dollars worth of cars for two hundred thousand dollars. And the same thing could work here. I’ve already approached our board on it. We have made an offer, I think three or four million dollars on it, and that was just to get the ball rolling. It’s worth more than that. And we couldn’t make that offer without the permission of our board. And when I brought it up at the board, why, especially the outside directors said, “Well, gee whiz, it worked before; why wouldn’t it work again?” So that’s real exciting.

The day I walked in there and looked at that— [shakes head]! And of course, I feel sorry for Fritz because I know how much he loves the cars. But that’s the way the ball bounces or somethin’. And maybe nothing will come of it, but we’re working on it. But it’s an exciting collection.

And there are, in the collection there, like he said, it’s the second largest to us. I think there’s around five hundred cars. Besides the Bugattis, he has a lot of other interesting things, and they’re rare things. But let me get a list of them, too. I could go on maybe a hundred cars that are just extremely exciting.

And other museums in Europe—of course, compared to Schlumpt, they’re all quite small. And just about every country has

some. I can’t think of a country—like Holland has two, and they’re both very small. So funny, I had a driver there, and he knew about one of ‘em; he didn’t know about the other one.

We were short of time when we were there. So I had a list, and I wanted to go to one museum. And so we were on our way there, which was maybe forty miles from Amsterdam, and then I said, “Where’s So-and-so?”

And he said, “Oh, that’s clear across the country.”

And I said, “Okay, how far is it?” Well, that was a hundred and thirty miles or something, which is clear across the country, so I looked— [laughing]. So I said, “Well, how long to go—?” Well, two hours to get there, two and a half— ‘cause they had pretty good roads. It might’ve been less than that, maybe a hundred miles. So we went over there and looked at—. We got a big kick out of that; Verna was along. You know—”Did you see Holland?”

“Well, yeah, we saw all of Holland; we—.”

The one museum didn’t amount to much, but another one was—that was the one that was the long distance. That was a car freak that—a lot of people do that. Well, like ours is close to our business. I forget what business this fella was in, but the reason he was way over where he was, was ‘cause it was where his factory was. And right next door he built this building, and it was really interesting. He had maybe a hundred cars. But he’d used a lot of wood and a good architect and some—he had multilevel again and some slanted roof [gestures pointed] you know, triangle stuff and all and just real, real— and the natural wood, exposed wood and exposed beams, and the cars were displayed very, very effectively. So that’s a good museum. And of course, we learned a lot there. See, every one of these, we have pictures and you know—I love to steal ideas.

What's the owner like there?

I didn't get to meet him. He wasn't there. But he corresponded—a letter this long, and “So sorry I wasn't there.” He was away on business. 'course, they're always thrilled when I'd show up because I'm known as the Number One.

And then the funny one was in [Finland]. Oh, my wife and I were there, and we decided one year to visit—I'd been to Sweden and Denmark. I'd never been to Norway or [Finland], and my wife hadn't been to any. So I said, “Hey, let's go to all the Scandinavian countries—just one, two, three, four,” which we did, and it was very enjoyable. And the last one was [Finland], and as we went along, we looked at car museums, of course. But we got to [Finland], and I didn't—I have a list of museums, and I don't think I even looked [Finland] up.

So Finland, and you're way up there; I thought just—I dismissed it from my mind. So we had a driver, which you always have. And how did that go about? I think he heard I was coming somehow, and I don't know how he found out. We stayed at a hotel there; it was very nice.

But anyway, we had this driver, so we went down, and he's all like that (smiles)—real friendly, which some of 'em are, some of 'em aren't. And I thought, “Well, that's nice.” And we got in, and we started—he could speak English. He's showin' us around. And he called me “Mr. Harrah.” And then I looked on the seat or somethin', and he had a car magazine, an old car magazine. And so I said, “Oh!” you know, da da da.

And he said, “Oh, yes, Mr. Harrah,” you know, and, so and so, this and that, and there was a car club there.

I said, “Oh, there is?”

He said, “Yes, there's a museum here, too.”

And I said, “A museum?”

Well, he said, “Are you gonna go to the museum?”

And I said, “I didn't know there was one.” It wasn't in any of the books.

And he said, “Oh, yes,” so and so.

I said, “Well, gee whiz, can you get me in?” It was Sunday.

He said, “Well, it's private. They're not open, except at special—.” And he said, “Sunday, gee, I don't know.”

And I said, “Well—” and we had to leave the next day. I said, “Would you call and see if you can?”

So he called, and the museum was closed. And he got the owner, [Aulis Pakula], and the owner was real excited. He'd heard of me, and he'd been to our museum, come to find out. But I'd never heard of him. But, “Oh, yes, yes, come out in half an hour” (which is that long it took to get there).

So we went out, and he met us, and he was just like this [shakes], he was so excited—a little guy. And he had this cutest little museum. He had a lot of money (I don't know where he got it—well, he was in somethin'). But it was way out in the middle of—it was on his farm, more or less. And it was out there, and modern building, a lot of glass, and very pretty architecturally. And he had maybe fifty cars, and they were excellent cars. And for fifty cars, he had excellent choice. And he restored them there. He had a little shop: he had some workmen, and that was his big thing. He just loved doing it.

So we got there, and he was just so excited, and he introduced us to his wife. He could speak English pretty good. And his wife couldn't say a word. They invited us in their home, and we had tea and we had cakes, and they just—he was just like this, just so excited. And Verna got such a kick! And he'd look at me, you know, and just—you know, it was

like God visiting or somethin'. And then he showed me the collection and all, and—well, we spent three or four hours. And he was just so wonderful.

And so then we got pretty well known, and he said—I said, “Well, you should come sometime.”

He said, “I’ve been there twice.”

And I said, “Well, why didn’t you tell me?”

And he—”Oh, I—” [hangs head, shy], you know.

I said, “Well, gee whiz, the next time you come, let me know!”

So he knew every car we had. So he had a Stutz, which, you know, he had a lot of European cars, but he had a Stutz. So I admired his Stutz. And he said, “Yeah, it’s pretty.” Well, he was restoring it. And we talked about it a little bit, and he said, “You know, Mr. Harrah, your Stutz—the paint on the door is wrong.

And I said, “Well, which Stutz?”

And he said, “Well, the ’26 Stutz Roadster.”

I said, “Well, I don’t know about that.”

And he said, “No, it’s wrong.”

Then [laughing] Verna’s listening, so I said, “Well, I’ll check it out, check it out.”

So then after he left, she said [whispers], “Well, is it wrong or isn’t it?”

And I said [whispers], “I don’t know!” [Laughs]

So I got back, and it’s a car that we had bought; we didn’t restore it ourselves. And it was the original car, but it had been touched up just a little. So we got back and checked it out, and the door was wrong! There was no question [laughing]. So when I got back, I wrote him a letter and said, “Thank you. You were so right,” da da da da da.

And then he’s been here once or twice since then. He does let us know now when he’s coming, but I think both times I’ve been away. But it was such a wonderful day, and totally unexpected.

I didn’t tell you about Baron Raben, did I? Oh, boy, he’s somethin’ else. Baron Raben is spelled r-a-b-e-n, and it’s real long—Rabenschnitzel, somethin’ or other. But he’s known as Baron Raben in Denmark. And I met him on the Brighton Run, and he’s an extremely interesting man. You know, he had a car there, and his wife was a lovely lady. And we became kinda friendly just—we liked each other. And he’s extremely impressive. I’m six-two; he must be six-three or -four—very straight and talks quite, you know—kinda dominates things, but pleasantly.

So we became closer and closer, and Verna met him, and we liked him and all. So when we were goin’ on our Scandinavian country tour, we told him we were comin’. And he said, “Well, I live way out—.” He said, “I want you to be my house guests.” And we corresponded back, and well, we just never did that and—(or maybe it was on the phone), and he said, “I insist—.” And he lives in a castle. And this is a thing that’s handed down the family for hundreds of years.

So Verna and I talked it over and thought, “Well, why not? Let’s try it.” So we were the house quests. And we stayed in Copenhagen, and then it’s about eighty miles from there to the castle, and we said, “Well, how do we get there?”

“Well,” he said, “I’ll have a car pick you up,” which he did—a limousine. And they drove us out. And we got out to the castle, and there’s four towers. And he has a car museum there, which is just the last few years he’s had that. But there’s four towers, and the towers are just huge. In fact, there’s only one tower that they keep open because of the expense. And they live there. And then on the lower floor (you know, it goes up, up, up)—the lower floor is part of the museum, and that’s where we stayed. And we had our suite, and it was old as could be, and we were a little concerned about

that, you know—how about the bathroom? But fortunately, it had been modernized, and they had modern bathrooms. My wife and I like two bathrooms, and we had two bathrooms. And this huge old—and it was in the fall of the year, I believe—this huge old castle—we thought we were gonna freeze to death, but it was very warm; they had modern heating in there. And we had dinner there, and well, we stayed—we went right in the afternoon, had a couple of drinks, had dinner, and talked cars. Plus he was showin’ us around. And then stayed the night and had breakfast in our room with a butler, and then stayed for lunch and then left.

And when I first met him, I’d inquired about him, as he talks a lot. And then I’ve been to his museum ten years ago maybe, when he first opened it up. And he wasn’t there. It was a short-term thing; you know, I decided a week before. And he unfortunately had to be the other side of Denmark, which is a couple hundred miles. But I was there, and I was shown through it. And they said, “The Baron’s on the phone.”

And he was on the phone, and he spoke pretty good English. He apologized for not bein’ there, and I said, “Oh, that’s o—” you know.

And he said, “There’s three things a year I have to do— to attend this and that.” And he said, “Just today I have to be here; otherwise I’d be there with you. I apologize profusely,” da da da da da.

And I said, “It’s okay, it’s okay! I’ll see you—” da da da.

And he talked for forty-five minutes, and this is a long-distance call. And he apologized for five or ten minutes. And then, “On your Auburn,” so and so is a such and such; “And on your Chrysler,” it’s this, that, and the other and da da da da da—on and on.

So I had been there before. But I wasn’t even in the castle then; I was just in a little museum he had there. But seeing the castle, since I was there before, he built a new building, modern building for his collection, and the collection had increased four times. I think when I was there the first time, it was maybe thirty or forty cars. Now it’s a hundred and some.

And, as I said, we had dinner there. And Verna and I are—we’d been around a little bit, and we have eaten a lot of things but she gets a little squeamish and she says [whispers], “I wonder what we’ll have for dinner.”

I said, “I don’t know.”

First he told us, “Gonna give you a typical Danish dinner—the whole thing.”

So we started out, and so here come this and that. I think it’s about the second course, and oh—you sit down and it was in this huge castle and the huge dining room, like you’ve seen in the movies, you know—and the four of us at the table. We sat down, and I think there were about eight wine glasses [gestures a row] like that. And of course, we had a couple of drinks before. And then I think, without exaggeration, there were eight wine glasses, and all different kinds of wines we had each course. There were eight or ten courses.

But anyway, the first or second course was raw fish. And so Verna—and I love to hear her tell the story ’cause she said, “I—” you know. And he [said], “Here you are!” [gesture, passing dish]—raw fish.

So she said, “I—.”

I said, “Do you want some?”

And she said, “Oh, no. No, I don’t think—.”

He said, “Well, here, have some anyway.” So he gave me some. So she looked at it, and she looked at me. We both had a couple of more belts of wine. And so I picked mine up and ate it. So then she just took a little corner off of hers, you know.

And then she tells the story later; she said she loved me and all that, but she said when I did that, she thought that was one of the nicest things she'd ever—'course she knew how much I hated it. But I wanted to—you know, I was the guest. So she said, "Oh, he just ate—." And oh, she said the shocking thing to her was I got it down with a lot of wine, so then the Baron said, "Would you like some more?"

And I said, "Yes!" [Laughs]

Then I come over. She said, "I thought that was wonderful to—but I don't know how you did it! How'd you keep it down?"

And I said, "Well, did you notice that wine going down?"

Then part of the thing, he took me in his wine cellar, and it really upset Verna 'cause he invited me to the wine cellar, and not Verna. And she was a little disappointed. And then his wife, who's a recent wife—she's an American that had been in Europe for some time, and a real fun lady. And she said, "Verna, don't get uptight; I've never been in there."

And it's the most—I've been in wine cellars—this is the most exciting wine cellar I've ever been in because, you know, it's been in the family forever. And like Chateau Mouton Rothschild is one of my favorite wines, and it's a world famous wine. And we have some. I've only been into it for ten or some years. And I think the oldest we have is maybe '55 or something.

But he had this list of wines he had in there. And then when you went in, here's just huge wine, wine, wine, wine, wine—and dust, you know. He gave me this wine list to look at. Well, when we had dinner, he showed me the wine list. And he has Chateau Mouton Rothschild of—he doesn't even have later than '55 on his menu. But he has '48 and '35 and '23 and '18 and '17 and 1911 and 1908 and 1897—. I mean—a Mouton Roth—just this

one wine, and case upon case of it—just—it's unbelievable!

Then when you go in there (and it's real cute), there's a false wall that you can see has been made fairly recent, you know—brick wall. And that was, see, they were there; they were occupied during the War. And when the Germans were comin' (they knew they were coming), they put this false wall in to protect his wine cellar, and they never found it, although they weren't in the house very much—I mean the castle. And then after the War, he just cut a hole in the false wall, so you just walk through the hole, then to the door with all the locks on it and all that, which is kinda fun. And of course, Verna—she got to walk through the false wall, but not through the—[laughter].

But he told me also, during the War, well—you know, I didn't want to say, "How was it during the War?"

But he said, "We did—," he said, "War was, you know, difficult." But he said, "We got by it very easily." He said, "We were occupied, as you know." And he said, "We knew they were coming, that they were on the borders—here they come. And what's gonna happen? And, you know, how bad is it gonna be?"

So he said that a German soldier appeared at the castle door—[salutes] "Baron Raben, General So-and-so would like to speak to you." And I don't know if the general came in there or the Baron met him outside, but it was very accordin' to protocol.

And he said he met this general, and the general saluted him [gestures], and he said, "I'm sorry, Baron, that we have to occupy your property, but," he said, "I assure you," he said, "I have a very similar life-style to yours. I have a very similar castle (or whatever)—estate." And he said, "I assure you we won't bother you at all, and we will do as little as possible."

And he said they never went in the castle, and they camped down kind of on the edge of

the property; the occupation of, you know, six or eight or ten or twenty soldiers just stayed down there and never came up, never did a darn thing, never bothered 'em at all.

The funny thing, other than the thing about the Baron— this castle is just huge. And when he and (what's her name?)—. But when he'd call her—when they get in this huge castle, you don't know where you are, you know. So when he'd want her or she'd want him, they'd go [loudly], "Hup! Hup!"—you know, only much louder than that. And you could hear it, you know. [Laughter] And they'd keep—"Hup, hup!"—and gradually [gesture, coming together], you know. And we—Verna and I like— they said, "well, how else you gonna do it?" You know, 'cause it's so huge you can't say, "I'm goin' up to the—" you know, "twenty-second bedroom," or whatever. You just—. Elizabeth's her name. B u t he—[loudly] "Elizabeth! Elizabeth!" She had a name for him, but I can't remember it.

Also on this estate (oh, this is a big thing), I'd heard that he had ten thousand acres in Denmark, when I'd first met him, you know. And I thought, "Ten thousand acres? Ten thousand acres in Nevada or ten thousand acres anywhere is a lot, but in Denmark, that's a big chunk of it!"

So then he showed us around. And he had this little car, and he drove us around the estate—took an hour. And I said, "I understand you have ten thousand."

And he said, "Oh, no. It's ten thousand hectares" (which comes out I think twenty-three or twenty-four thousand acres). Can you imagine that? And it goes right down to the sea. It's just, oh, maybe a quarter of a mile from the castle to the sea, and he has this little railroad around. And he takes you on the railroad, and it goes down; that's part of the tour when you go to the museum—you can take a ride on the railroad. It's a little, you

know, narrow gauge. And go right down to the sea, and there's the—whatever sea it is, And all because of the old cars.

What cars does he have that you just yearn over?

Ooh! He doesn't have a very good collection. He's kind of a Johnny-come-lately. Oh, he has one—that's a good point of the story. He was born and raised there. And when he was a child, they had a Rolls Royce; it's either a 1910 or '11 Rolls Royce (he's about my age). And then later they had other cars and other cars. And so he forgot about the—he wasn't a car person; he forgot about the Rolls Royce. So then maybe fifteen years ago or some years, there's a Rolls Royce Owners Club, and they have a list of all the Rolls Royces; the factory has a list. Well, the Rolls Royce Owners Club was trying' to get in touch with all owners for all Rolls Royces to check 'em out, where they all went, 'cause they built so few over the years.

So they found this one had gone to Denmark in 1911 to Baron So-and-so, and then no further word. So they wrote: "Dear—, Our records show (or the Rolls Royce records show) that the car went there in such and such. Could you tell us what happened to it?"

So Baron Raben got the letter, and it—this estate with all the land and this building here and a building there and a building there and a building there and a building there. And so he read that, and he said, "Oh, gee—!" Well, you know, that Rolls Royce, he hadn't thought of it in thirty years, and he knew they hadn't sold it. And he said, "What ever happened to that Rolls Royce? So that'd be kinda fun to get that out, Where is it?" So he asked this guy and that guy, you know; and there's just a group of buildings here and a group of buildings there. So finally he had everybody lookin'—"Well,

let's find the Rolls Royce." And they looked, and they looked, and they looked. "Do you remember—?"

"Yeah, I saw it," and—you know. They looked, and they couldn't find it, couldn't find it. So they kept looking and looking, and finally I guess they gave up. But it worried him a little.

And then—I'm not sure of this—whether they were reading on a building or they noticed something, that there was a false wall had been put in, and the Rolls Royce was behind that—and maybe World War I, I don't know. But anyway, he got it out, and wow, it was in real good condition. And of course, I saw the car, rode in the car. And I think all he did was put tires on it and maybe paint it, and that's it.

So he said, "Gee, this is fun." So then he thought, well, they used to have a So-and-so which is long gone, but he found one of them. And then on and on and on and on. But he doesn't have too much; you know, he has just run-of-the-mill things, really, except this Rolls Royce.

And Spain— [laughs] that's funny. I was in—yeah, it was Madrid. I went there just on a spur-of-the-moment thing. I was in Italy and in Rome; I had some business—well, my clothes and all. And we were supposed to finish on Sunday and go to London, I believe. Instead of that, I think we [were to] finish on Saturday. Instead of that, I think I finished on Thursday. So I got to thinkin' and lookin', and I walked by a travel agency and fit] had a picture of Spain there, and it was an hour away or forty-five minutes. And I thought, "Gee whiz! We got a day or so; why not go?" 'cause we'd seen Rome over and over. So I called my wife at the hotel, said, "What do you think?"

And she said, "Well, can we do it?"

And I said, "Yeah, I think I can," or I said, "Let me try."

So I went in the travel agency, and it was like four in the afternoon. And I said, "I'd like to go to Spain today and go to London on day after tomorrow." And it was like, say, four o'clock, and it was—you know, sometimes you get lucky—quite often, really—with some of these travel agency people. And it didn't flabbergast her at all. She just got right on the phone and da da da, da da da, and she had me on the airline in an hour and a half.

"And the hotel," she said, "is very difficult." There's a convention or whatever they called it—but she said, "Oh, no, no."

And they said, "Oh—." And there was a new hotel that had just opened, and it wasn't even in the books yet. And she got us in there.

So just at five-thirty we're on the plane to Madrid. And we got there, and I had one name that I knew of that I corresponded with in Madrid—car person. So I called them and they weren't there. But I left my name, which meant a lot to them. And they called back and apologized. They were out of town and couldn't get back, but they'd send another car person over, which arrived the next morning promptly at nine o'clock or something to show me the cars in Madrid.

Oh, a real funny thing. There was a car fella there—oh, that was the fella that was gone that I knew. He is a car collector, and he was a nephew of Franco, or a relative. And his name was the same as Franco. So he called me. And prior to that—and the hotel—they were just—tolerated us, you know. They weren't rude or anything, but we were just a couple of dumb Americans. And I was in the lobby or something, and "Mr. Harrah! Mr. Harrah! So-and-so Franco is calling," you know. And boy! Did I get attention! Then he called back a couple of times if laughing]; we could do no wrong from then on.

Anyway, he couldn't get there (that was it), and he apologized and told me what cars

he had and where I could see them, and he was sending a couple of friends to pick me up and show me every car in Madrid. And at that time, you couldn't import cars into Madrid, new cars or old cars, under Franco. No way, absolutely. Fact, Fiat opened up a factory there, only it was owned by Spain. And it's called the Seat; it's identical to a Fiat. But you could not, no way, bring a car in. And that included antique cars. So whatever antique cars were there were—that was it. And you couldn't—no matter how much money you had, you couldn't go out and buy one. So they showed me two cars here and four cars there, and then the fella said, "I want to show ya—." The fella had a big collection; he had ten cars. And they were here, two here and four here and so on. And he was a mechanic that owned the ten cars. And they were good cars. And he couldn't speak a word of English, the mechanic, but he's along, and he's grinnin' and, you know, showin'—yeah. Then he'd show so and so, and then the other fella would interpret. "Does your Auburn have the so and so?" And I'd say yes or no.

So anyway, we looked and looked, and finally he showed me a curved-dash Olds. And it was a real good one; that's about 1902 or '3, and there's a lot of 'em around the world. It was a very good one. It was real shiny; it looked like it'd been restored. So he showed me that, you know. So I looked at it—"Hm, nice aids, but it's no big deal, a curved dash."

So he kind of like that [disappointed]. And then his friend, he said, "Well, did you see—look at—?"

I said, "Yeah."

They said, "Would you look at it again?" SO I looked at the Olds. It's a nice curved-dash Olds.

So I said, "Gee, it's a nice car, nice car." And he's still lookin' at me—the Spaniard that

couldn't speak. So to the other fella I said, "What's goin' on here?"

And he said, "Well, what he's—," he said, "I should've told you. What he's trying to tell ya is that he built that car."

I said, "What do you mean, built it?"

He said, "He built it from the ground up."

And so then I looked at it closely, and I could scarcely— and it looked like just a perfect curved-dash Olds. Then he told me through his friend that he had built it. And as he didn't have one, he felt he should have one in the collection because every collection has a curved-dash Olds. There was one in Spain that he borrowed, and he just copied every part on the car, which is just a tremendous undertaking. But he was real, you know, clever mechanic, plus the desire to do it. But that was somethin'.

Also there's a Pegaso, which is a sports car that was built in Spain in the '50s. And it was a very modern sports car. They weren't building any cars in Spain at that time, and they were building a lot of trucks; the name of the truck manufacturer was Pegaso. And so they thought they'd go into sports Cars; I don't know how that came about. And it was kind of a government-controlled thing, but they got permission to build this sports car. And it was a real superior sports car—good looking (we have one in the Collection), and V-8, overhead cam, five speeds, independent rear end—all the goodies. Fact, they had a Ferrari in that respect.

But they only built I think a hundred and ten of them, and financially, it was twenty-seven thousand dollars, I think, or maybe twenty-two thousand, which was way up there then. So they just didn't sell. So maybe a hundred and five was the total production. And we had three of them at one time, I believe, 'cause we bought one, 'cause it was a Pegaso. And then we bought another one; it

was better. And then we bought another one; it was better. And then we restored one. And then after we restored it, we had no need for the other one or two, so we sold them. But at the time I think we had three.

And the point of my story is—they're showin' me around and mentioned one fella that wasn't there. But they said (they're a car collector)—and they said, "He has a Pegaso!" [Chuckles] I

And I said, "Oh, wow!"

And they said, "Do you have one?"

And I said, "Yeah, we have three of them." And they just couldn't believe it 'cause that was the ultimate, to own a Pegaso, which, of course, you would if you lived in Spain.

Did you see anything to yearn over there?

In Spain? They just have run-of-the-mill—except Franco did have a Duesenberg Model J7 I saw it. But we have Duesenbergs.

Then in Stuttgart, Germany, Mercedes has a museum. It's really a wonderful museum—antique car museum. And they're one of the car companies (there aren't too many) that has kept track of the history and spent a little money on it. And this is [a] beautiful, modern museum, multilevel. And of course, they have examples of all—you know, they've been in business since eighteen ninety-somethin' with Mercedes; then it was Benz, and then they went together. And they have examples of each, and the historical ones, which, of course, they should have, and just one-of-a-kind race cars. You know, they did a lot of racing.

So they have maybe a hundred cars in their museum. And they're exciting cars of the—well, like they have the first—I think it was the first recognized gasoline automobile—it's a Benz. I don't know, I think that's about 1892. I rode in one, the 1893 they have over there—or 1894, 1893—I think 1891

is the very earliest. And I rode in the 1893, and they have an 1891—.

Then, being a Mercedes dealer, recently I visited the Mercedes factory. I'd been there before as an old car guy, and been through the museum and through the factory, too. As part of our tour, they took us through the factory. Then going back as a dealer, I saw even more. And this 1891, the first Benz, they had on display, and it looked real good. And come to find out, the original one is such a rare piece—it is, I guess, recognized the world over as the first automobile. There were prior steam wagons and things, but actual automobile—I think this is known as the first one. And it was so valuable and so rare that they gave it to the—Mercedes Benz people gave it to a university there, a famous university, where it's enshrined, I guess. But they made a duplicate of it, and the duplicate is just excellent, and you can't tell it from the original.

Then on my visit as a dealer, I saw this duplicate, which I thought was the original, and they told, no, it was a duplicate.

I said, "Oh, wow! Can I get one?"

And, "Oh, no, no, no."

So then you go to one notch higher. Said, "Can I get one? I'll pay, I'll pay," you know, "I need it for the museum," 'cause it looks just like it.

And they said, "Well, we'll consider it."

And then I went to the next guy, you know—"I need it badly."

And, "Well, I think we can do it."

So then I've been corresponding, and last September or something I got a letter, you know—"When is your new museum done?" 'cause I told 'em about the new museum out here.

And, "Why do you want—?"

"Well, we want to have the car for you by then," which is a couple of—.

I wrote back, “No, that’s two years. Can I have it sooner?”

“No, we’d rather do it in conjunction with the—.” So then we’re goin’ a notch higher to see if we can get it before that.

But they have just some wonderful cars, which they should have, just like Ford Museum has some wonderful Fords, which they should have.

There’s a difference, though, isn’t there, between this commercial thing, like Mercedes and the Ford Museum, and the people who collect cars because they love them?

Oh, yeah. Yeah, quite. But Mercedes is—they’re displayed beautifully, and there’s a love there, really, although it is a commercial thing. And Ford wasn’t that way until recently. Now they’ve turned around, and they’re doing it the way it should be done—with some love—although it also is a commercial thing.

Well, Verna and I went to Moscow, and it was terribly disappointing ‘cause we’d been to the fair in Spokane, Washington, and there they had a Russian presentation. And they had beautiful pictures and English-speaking Russians, and how wonderful it was to visit Russia, and how neat it was. So we said, “Oh, we’ll go.” And we went, and it wasn’t at all like they’d advertised, which is another story.

We got there, and it was awful, just terrible. We finally got a lady guide that we got along with pretty well. She showed us around, and, you know, you spend a day together, you get acquainted. I have several books that have lists of old car museums. It listed one in Moscow, which I didn’t know till I got there. I just happened to have it with me, and I read “Moscow.” So I asked her about it.

She said, “Well, gee, I don’t know anything about it. But we can go there.” It was part of another museum.

We went there, and there’s bugs and all sorts of things. The cars are in the next building. We got there; they didn’t have anyone in charge, but she dug up this kid; he was a car fella and real excited to meet me. He kinda snuck out from his job in an engineering part of the museum (he kinda said, “I’ll be gone for ten minutes” to somebody), took us over and showed us the car museum, which had three cars. [Laughing] It was so pitiful ‘cause he was so proud! “Now here we are—” and he showed ‘em.

They had one, a Russian car, a 1910 or ‘11 (I don’t remember the make). See, they’re great copiers, and they took a Model A Ford when they came out and copied it part for part; the parts are interchangeable. The way you can tell it’s Russian, the nameplate’s a little different, but the fenders and the engine is identical. They had one of those there. Then they did the same thing with a Packard; they love Packards. So they had about a ’55 Packard, which they’d done the same thing with—I think it’s a Ziss, and later it became the Zil. They still use ‘em today. You order a limousine in Moscow, and you get about a ’56—it’s a Zil, but it’s an exact copy of a ’56 Packard. Anyway, they have three cars in their Moscow auto museum.

Then I did get a break—this guide we had, he couldn’t speak English very well, and he “[chatters].” This was, say like Friday, and what he was saying was, “You’re lucky to be here because tomorrow they’re gonna have a show out in one of the—” like athletic field or a park. It was a modern car show. Of course, everything’s “state,” but these were the newest models of Russian cars and trucks, which I thought there were just one or two, but maybe there’s ten or fifteen different size cars and trucks and things. In conjunction with it, they had some old cars that various divisions of the manufacturing had. I don’t know where

they came from; they didn't. come out of the museum.

So we went. It was a little trouble to do it, but I was so glad, 'cause there were eight or ten antique cars there, cars I'd never seen before, most of 'em. So that was fun.

We don't have a Russian car yet. We've been working for years—we've had an opportunity at a couple, but some of 'em are copies of Buicks, a '50 or '48 Buick, and they're just awful-lookin' things. I want to get a Zil or a Ziss, which I will.

DREAM OF A NEW MUSEUM

What kind of value do you think the Collection has now, educationally, or as a showpiece, or as an example of the advance of mechanics?

Well, of course, I'm the last one that should answer that, I think, because I'm so close to it. But it means a lot to me, and there is an example of about anything out there, so in that respect it's very educational. But the value, I mean, it's better than any other museum in the world, or better than Ford has, or better than General Motors has, and history-wise, it's the best there is. But value—I just can't answer that.

Well, money-wise, then, are there some of the cars that are insured separately or something like that to give them a different status?

No. There are cars more valuable than others. I guess the most valuable ones in the Collection are the Bugatti Royales. And none has sold, and I guess I bought the last one for fifty thousand dollars, and that was ten, fifteen years ago. So they say—or the writers and all say—they're worth half a million, which maybe they are. There's only six in the world. And they're quite an exciting car. I think at an

auction probably a Bugatti Royale would go for half a million, which is more than "around the world" Thomas would go for 'cause it's more of a museum—. The Royale is a—they're a very big car. Most Bugattis were small, but these were just huge. Well, there's two of 'em we have—right there [shows book]. A hundred and seventy inch like a Cad 75, a hundred and fifty inch; these are a hundred and seventy. They're two feet longer.

Well, we don't insure 'em because we insure 'em our—we call it self-insurance, which is no insurance, because that's our business—gamblin' business—and why pay them? You know, we have a loss, we have a loss. We save the premium, plus we protect 'em very well against fire and against theft, and about everything. They're very well protected.

Do you have any problems, people that you've had to run out?

Oh, well, maybe a drunk or something, but smart kids. Only problem really is a little petty theft, like a radiator ornament. We've lost a few. At times we weren't as careful, like some radiator—which was our fault. I hate to say our because I had strongly urged 'em to tie everything down, and they had a few cars where they didn't and we lost a few radiator ornaments and things, but relatively minor, which you shouldn't let it get you down. That's the way the world is, and it always has been. Take any period, any time, and you just can't leave anything of value out with turning your back. Most people won't touch it, but somebody will. But that's not really a major problem.

Yeah, we watch 'em. And in our new facility we'll really have some (what's the word) space age sort of thing where you know—temperature and any sound, and the least change of any kind. Well, like you've

seen on some of these TV shows where they steal the gold and jewels or something, and they have all this—and we'll have some of that, too, you know, where it's realistic. But it'll be free from fire and just be no way of stealin' anything out of there at any time, any—you know, just impossible. I hate to say that because that'll be a dare to them, or a challenge. But it'll just be as foolproof as—. You touch that and the bell rings and lights start flashing and the whole—.

Would you like to describe how the planning for the new museum is going and how it came about?

Oh. Well, when we started out there, we were only in Sparks; we were going to be there a year, which is—we were serious. And we looked, and other things kept coming up, and other things kept coming up, and there's always the money problem. And then our landlord there is a very nice man.

John Dermody, he built us a building, and we leased this—our property. And then we needed another building, and he built it and charged us so much—percentage of the cost of the building—rent—and everything. It's only been on a year to year to year to year, 'cause we never knew what our plans were, and he was fine; he didn't push us. So we're still on a year-to-year out there. And as we've needed more buildings, he's built them and just added it onto our year-to-year rent, really.

But we planned, and which way should we go, and decided that finally west of town was the place because it was before—most people come from the west. So that's where most the people'd be coming from, and we wanted to be on the right-hand side of the highway because it's—for obvious reasons. And also we want to be as close to Reno as possible; we didn't want to be fifteen miles out because we wanted the

Reno people out there. We started acquirin' property (I think it's a mile and a half west of Reno, something like that), and it was quite a project—I'm real proud of it.

I wasn't too close to it either. I did that at the Lake; I did that myself up there. I put about ten different pieces of property together, where it's all one piece now; but it was this deal and that deal and can you fit that one in? And we did the exact same thing out west of town. And Sheppard and some of 'em—Lloyd Dyer's very active in it—and we have all the pieces now. There's three hundred and plus acres, which wasn't easy because there was fifty acres and ten acres and six acres and all those little odds and ends. And word gets out what you're doing, and then they get unreasonable; it's done, I'm happy to say. So it's really exciting; I mean it's hard to describe, but we are on the “Ring Road.” So we'll be on Highway 80, plus the “Ring Road,” which is as good a location, I guess, as there is in the city of Reno for anything like that. And where our plans are underway for the museum complex, I think there's six hundred thousand square feet, more or less, which is a lot of feet. But it takes a lot of feet for cars, and of course, the cars'll be displayed much better than they are out here—be a little space between them, and the more exotic ones I think we're—.

The plan is for three hundred of our more favorite cars. And that'll take a lot of selection, but there'll be Duesenbergs and the “around the world” car and Bugatti Royales and Stutzes and—so it'd be possible to go in and see three hundred cars, which is a wonderful cross section of automotive history. And then if you like, you can go on and see the Fords and the rest of the Stutzes and so on. And we're goin' into that very thoroughly. So that a person wants to spend an hour, they can see about every prime item we have. And then if you're a Ford guy, Chevy guy, you can go, and set

your own pace. And there'll be possibly the "blue tour" and the "red tour" and the "yellow tour" and so on.

Then we're going into some animation. We're great believers in copying something good, and Disneyland is excellent. And they have figures there that make speeches, you know—Abraham Lincoln and so on. We know the people that build those—Disney doesn't build those, surprisingly; there's a separate company does. So we've talked to them, and they're very interested, and they're coming up with some ideas, so we're doing a lot of planning.

That's really fun. Of course, I don't really get into that too much; that's more show biz, which there are people who do that, and we're working with them. I stay mostly with the cars, but I realize just lookin' at cars can get boring, and then you have to have something else. There'll be plenty else. And then there'll be casino, of course, and that's a separate matter, too. I'm not in that at all, but it'll be right there. And you want to eat, you can have a hot dog, or if you want a better meal, you can have a nicer meal. We have to start small out there, and then the museum'll cost so much that there isn't too much left over for hotel or anything. We won't have any accommodations at first, but we will have restaurants and casino and bar and entertainment and so on—kinda like we started here; we had everything but the hotel.

And then I'd also like a "camperland" out there— it's ideal for that—plus a golf course, which I'm not a golfer, but I'm excited in building a golf course 'cause there isn't really one in Reno that I believe is the kind that you—championship golf, where that's really super, which is the way we would do it, of course.

What about things for children? Have you thought about kind of an old-car merry-go-round or anything like that?

Oh yeah, yeah, 'course—all that stuff. Like we're even talking of—which I like—we're talking of a—well, two ways. Gee, it's a long ways; you get tired. So one is a—like a—what do they call those—alligator trains—. What are those trains where they have something pull it—?

There's a word for it they use at Disney. So, we'll have those—will carry twenty, thirty people, and we'll go rather slowly and give the high spots. And then there'll be periodic stops, like say in the whole thing there'll be maybe twelve stops. So if you're interested in the Fords, you get on and you go along, and when you get to the Fords, you can get off and then catch the next one, like that.

And something else I like—nobody else likes it too much but I like it—is like a golf cart you could rent, only it'll look like a little car. And you'd be two-passenger, four-passenger, and they'll have to be designed just so, 'cause the aisles—you will have to allow so that I can stop and you can pass me and so on. But I'd like to rent them very cheaply, like fifty cents an hour so it'd be just enough to pay for 'em. But you can go at your own pace. So you can go along, you know—so you couldn't care less about that car, that car, that car, but here's oh, why it's like Aunt So-and-so had. And you stop and you can get out and go look and all, and then get back in your little car. And I think that'll be the ideal way, and I would think, especially the true enthusiasts, that's the way they would like to go. And that's the way I'd like to go.

And then you also have to remember, like in building golf carts, you're down pretty low; but these, you have to look at the car—almost at standing eye level 'cause that's how you're used to seeing it. So, it'll have to be built kinda high and things like that. We're workin' on all that stuff, and that's kinda fun.

Well, I know I go through [HAC] and I, you know—I go through it all the time and I—oh, and they’re so close together and all. So many of ’em, you just do have to stand awful low to get the lines, you know. That’s a lot of it—is the beauty of—you don’t have to be a car enthusiast or mechanical at all to appreciate you know—oooh! And ugly too; some of ’em are just awful, and some of ’em are so beautiful. Many of ’em are much more beautiful than they build today—just super. It’s an art form, a lot of it.

I think if I had to choose a really ugly car, I’d choose that Crosley.

Yeah, Tom McCahill called it the ugliest car in the world. He died recently. He was quite a car writer.

That’s you know, very cheap—French car, two cylinder, and very light; you can lift it up, you know. Fact that’s how they park in Paris. They just nose it in like this and get out and lift the rear end, pull it in. [Chuckles] I remember our first introduction of those. I had a chauffeur in Paris one night, and he was quite a hot-rod; he really drove very fast and was very good driver. So we’re goin’—we’re a little late to where we were goin’, and here—rrrrrr and we came in—. So he got off the main street and he started down this alley, and he was just doin’ fine, forty, fifty miles an hour down this alley. And we come around a corner and here’s one of these Crosleys, and they’d parked it and it was stickin’ out—no way he could get by. And I thought, “What’s he gonna do?” you know, “We’re stuck!” And he just jumped out of the car, put it in park or brake on, ran around, grabbed one end of it (and he was a husky guy, but it didn’t weigh much), and pulled this end over, pulled that end over, and away he got, and down the road we went! It didn’t take twenty seconds. And I’m just [open mouth]—.

So we thought, “What are we gonna do?” you know, and we couldn’t back up and I’m late anyway. He was so cute.

I’d bet that if somebody told you you had to give up the casinos and the hotel and all of that, or the cars, you’d choose the cars to keep, wouldn’t you?

No.

You mean you could really give those up?

You got to be realistic, you know. They’re expensive at present; eventually they’ll be self-supporting and I think make some good money. But right now they’re a drain, and I couldn’t do that. I have a family and things like that. It would be not a pleasant decision, but it’d be a real easy one [chuckles].

You say they’re a drain; aren’t they a tax advantage for the corporation?

No, we get a deduction on ’em, but of course there’s expense of restoring em and all. No, they’re an expense right now. It reduces every year; we’re very proud of that, but—. If you left out the restoration expense., why it wouldn’t be an expense. But of course, that goes in, which really isn’t necessary because you take a five-thousand-dollar car and spend thirty thousand restoring it, you have a thirty-five-thousand-dollar car. So, it’s not an expense; it’s a capital, really, which government doesn’t agree with us exactly on that.

CAR CLUBS

We’ve talked about the publications of these car clubs. What about their activities: their meetings, their rallyes, their races?

Yeah, well, there's many different answers to that as there are car clubs, just about. Some are very active, and some are almost passive and for a good reason. There's one car club, it's only a year or so old; I don't know how long it'll run, but it's the Tucker Club, and there were only forty-two or forty-four Tuckers made, and there's about thirty-five still in existence. And some fella—he's a Tucker enthusiast, of course—started the Tucker Club. And they have an annual get-together which we attended last year; it was the first one. And we sent a Tucker to it, and I think they had five Tuckers there. And he's a real gung-ho guy; he's havin' another, I read the other day. Well, the Tucker News came. And it's scheduled for somewhere in a second Annual Tucker Meet, which is really kind of—I don't know how that's gonna work when there're so few cars.

But then like the Fords and Chevies—there're several car clubs in each, and they have annual meets and monthly meets and just about name it—they're going very good.

And the H. H. Franklin Club, the one I'm very familiar with, of course—they have an annual meeting in West Syracuse, New York, 'cause that's where the car was made, and it's always in August, which is an awful time for me. And I argued for years; I said, "Let's change the date, let's change the date!" And they were a bunch of old fogies. And finally, I will accept it when I can't beat it, so it's August, about August tenth, which is lousy, but I go there every year, and I always take two or three Franklins. And it's no longer in Syracuse; it's Cazenovia, which is a neat little town on a little lake there, not far from Syracuse. And there's a college there that's closed in the summer, so we have the meet on the college grounds. And they have a dorm there that they rent rooms to some of the members—the low cost rooms—and so we've been there

about ten years now, I guess, and that's kinda fun.

And then they have a West Trek; it's called the Annual Franklin Trek. And then about ten years ago again, they started a West Trek, which is the west coast. There's a lot of Franklin collectors in the West. So they have that every year. And we always send a car on it, and occasionally I go. In fact, about three years ago we had the West Trek in Reno. We supplied a lot of the Franklins, of course, but there were maybe ten, fifteen came from out of Reno. And we drove to Virginia City and so on, like a typical tour.

The Duesenberg Club—Auburn-Cord-Duesenberg—they meet in Auburn, Indiana, which was where the factory was. They meet there every August or September, I believe. I've been to that once or twice. That's become very commercial, so they kinda spoiled it.

And there's international car clubs like the Veteran Car Club of Great Britain. That's a very old club; that's the one that sponsors the Brighton Run, which we go on every year. Then, and there's a car club in France and a car club in Italy. We were on a tour in South Africa a few years ago, and I think it was the Veteran Car Club of South Africa put that one on. Then we're going to Australia next month, and I think that's the Veteran Car Club of Australia or similar—putting that on. And then sometimes several clubs'll go in together on a meet. And those meets are usually quite good, as we put 'em on here for years—the Horseless Carriage Club or the Reno Tour, we called it. I think we had about twenty of those (maybe fewer), and you invite the tour people, and certain qualifications to use the car, and you either "wear costumes" or "don't wear costumes." And there's the meals and tour package, which there's two ways of going. There's a complete package—or quite complete—where the rooms and most of

the meals are all in the package, except for maybe breakfast and things like that, and of course the drinks are on them, except on a Reno Tour we supplied the drinks, too, but we were kinda puttin' it on. What's so nice about that—like our Australian tour, and there'll be five hundred cars on that, but they make the arrangements. Of course, sometimes they're not as good as you'd like, but if you've been around a little, you can usually improve it as you go along, or push and shove a little bit, but generally it's quite good, and it's so nice. You just go up to the desk, and they have your name on a card and you give to them, and, "Oh yes, Mr. Harrah. You're in so-and-so and so-and-so," and it's nice.

"Where do I go for dinner? Where do I go for lunch?"

We were on a cross-country tour a couple of years ago (I told you already probably) from Seattle to Philadelphia. And most of the arrangements were made for us on there; our rooms were all Holiday Inns, and our room reservation was made, and then sometimes our meals. And it's kinda nice; you're part of the group, or if you don't know where to go, you just ask the fella next—"Hey, where do we go for (so on)?"

"Oh, it's down there." Like any tour, it's much easier in a group than it is on your own.

What kinds of people belong to these clubs?

Oh, there's really all kinds. Their primary thing is car enthusiast. That's what I liked about it when I first started was, most of 'em—there's a few phonies, but most of 'em are true car enthusiasts. Sometimes there'll be a person that figures they can sell some insurance or can make a couple of bucks, but ninety-nine percent are true enthusiasts. And their wives generally just go along because they're good wives, and so you get to know

each other. And what is nice, you just—it's every walk of life there is, just about. Like my good friend Bud Catlett, who I think I mentioned earlier, of Sacramento—he was a Sacramento policeman, and I was a Reno casino operator, and no way we'd ever meet, 'cept he'd give me a ticket or somethin'. We got to be the best of friends just because of our antique car interest. So there's—to answer your question, there's just every kind. And some have more money than others. Some do a lot of their own work; some don't do any. But there's always their enthusiasm for cars.

You talked about joining the Horseless Carriage Club. Maybe you can give a little rundown on the history of that Horseless Carriage Club from the time you joined it to what it has become.

Well, the national one I joined it. The Maxwell had an application with it, which I joined and learned about the tour and all, and subscribed to the magazine. And I think when I joined, there were maybe two or three hundred members—maybe four hundred, and I guess now there's three or four thousand possibly, and possibly more.

Then in the local club, which we started—a few of us—Horseless Carriage Club—that's called a regional group. Then when we started it, there were two or three other regional groups. I think we were about the third one. And at that time there was a lot of car interest in Reno primarily because of me, and some of my people that still are. The club's still going, and they have a meet once a month, and I go several times a year. And hardly any of the employees from HAG belong any more 'cause it's kinda grown away from it; I mean we have our people at work out there that do a good job, but they're not really into the car, so there's maybe three or four from out there that belong. And I belong, and the club just

goes along—has dinner at Sparks Nugget and dinner at the Shy Clown, but dinner at Harrah's once in a while, too. I don't know if I answered that or not.

How about just the organizational nitty-gritty that you have carried on for so many years with this group? Who were some of the other members? What did they like? What are their interests?

Well, the local group is—at one time we had a little politics—not much. But now it's resolved into more of a dinner club, and they have—well, that's the meetings; they're all dinner meetings, which brings a good turnout. We used to have about half and half; now they're once a month and they're a dinner meeting. They're well attended—I mean forty, fifty people. And then they have an annual tour and during the summer three or four picnics here and there, so they're quite active. That's it. There's no messages or anything.

And the national club is very similar. One time there were a lot of politics when they tried to change the Horseless Carriage Club because it is antique cars. And there was a—well, two groups—one tried to make a Classic car club out of it, and we stopped that. And then later along came a group that wanted to make it into the same as the Antique Auto Club. Like I said, earlier, the Antique Car Club covers all—from the antiques to the later even Classic cars, which is the way they've been, the way they are—fine. Horseless Carriage was the early ones. And then the Veteran Car Club was kind of the weak sister of the three, and there was a group got in it about ten years ago or so and decided that—or no. Prior to their getting in that, they were kind of snoopin' around, and they thought of taking the Horseless Carriage Club, of getting control of it and turning it around to be a direct competitor of the Antique Auto Club,

where it was the antiques and the later cars just a hundred percent.

So we objected strongly (and I was on the board at the time or had just gotten off the board) that that wasn't what the Horseless Carriage Club was about. They were out and running. So we had a real confrontation. And the only thing we could see that we could do to keep control—because it was so easy over a period of time they could've done it, in that a person'll have, say, two cars, an antique and a Classic, and he or she may like them both. But the antique is open usually, and you have to crank it and so on and so on. And the Classic is closed or it has windows in the top and a heater, and so many times they take the Classic, when we could see where the Classics could squeeze the “horseless carriages” aside if they had an equal basis in the club. So the only way we think we could see to save the Horseless Carriage Club was to change the bylaws so that the voting members had to at least own an antique car, which is a 1915 or older car. And to do that—and I got my lawyers in it and everything, and we found it had to be a vote of the members. And so, well, could it be by the mail, or could it be a meeting? And it could be either way, according to the bylaws of that time. But we thought if we sent it through the mail, we'd get beat because there were a lot of people leaning the other way, and this other side had done a lot of work.

So we decided to call a meeting, a special meeting, of the membership. And we gave all the legal notices, but we allowed as little time as possible (which I think was just a few weeks) in L.A., and we worked hard in L.A. to get our friends to show up. And then it was very close. So I was actually so involved and interested in it that I rented an airplane or chartered a plane; we didn't have any planes then. I think it was a DC-3 or DC-somethin'.

And we took all the Horseless Carriage members from Reno down (they were a hundred percent, of course), and there were thirty or forty of us and some met us down there. And those plus the L.A. members—and we had this vote, and we won it two to one.

And that became the bylaws of the club that to belong, to be a voting member, you have to own an antique car. And of course, that precludes them reversing it because it costs money to own, and nobody's gonna buy an antique car just to vote to change the club. So the Horseless Carriage Club is safe for the foreseeable future as an antique or "horseless-carriage" club. And that was kinda fun. We made some enemies, but we made some friends. And then as time goes on, like the ringleader of the other side, I'd say today is a good friend of mine. And that's been the case in all of 'em. The president of the Horseless Carriage Club was in for seven terms, then a group of us got together and kicked him out by politicking, and he today is one of my good friends, but we were sword points for a while. I used to get real involved in that stuff; I'd get real serious. [Chuckling] A group of us went around the country and made speeches on this getting rid of the previous president. I still hate to make speeches, but I really hated it then. But I did it.

Do most of these people tinker their own cars? Or do they have to come to Harrah's to get 'em fixed?

No, we don't fix 'em for anybody. We have more than we can handle ourselves. This is just a "ballpark"—I'd say twenty-five percent do it themselves. And twenty-five percent do most of it, and say, fifty to sixty percent do some of it, and then fifteen or twenty or twenty-five percent don't do anything—just have it done. Say, a one- or two-car fella,

maybe he doesn't do any of the work himself, but I mean, he can take his car down to restore and just say, "Restore that," bring it out, and pay a lot of money. Usually where he will get involved, but actually not too much, he may take it apart (which is no big deal) and take the frame somewhere and have it sandblasted, then maybe paint it himself, and take the rear end apart and look at it—which is not too big a job. And the gears are bad, then take 'em somewhere and have some made and put it together. And go along like that, so, well, he is doing it, but he's havin'—any machining or anything, he takes it.

Then the big thing about that is, that that's where the club comes in—or not necessarily the club, but the camaraderie is, "You're good on engines, and I'm good on upholstery; so you help me with my engine, and then I'll help you with your upholstery." There's an awful lot of that. "And this fella's a super painter, so he'll—" They kind of in a group, trade off and on. There's lot of that goes on, which is, course, good for everybody. Then they also learn by doing that. And then there are knacks; there's engine guys, and there's painters and—painters either good or not good—we find that in our experience out there that some are just good and some are really not too good.

There's a lot of group things done in cars. Like on the cross-country, there was this Jim Conants. Maybe it's Dorothy, yeah. They were on the cross-country with us, and they were people that did a little work, and they were the ones that Before the tour started, the tour chairman said, "Jim and Dorothy stand up please." And they stood up and held their hands up. Said, Okay, everybody see Jim and Dorothy. Now we're going to check you clear across the country, to check you in at night, see you made it—" 'cause to get the plaque at the end, you had to complete the tour. And

it you broke down, you had till that night to get there and if you didn't make it, then you lost points. So they said, "Every night they'll be checkin' you, and if they don't check you, why you look them up." So you all knew Jim and Dorothy. They worked real hard, and they had their kids with 'em, and they had this big Oldsmobile and—. They've become some of our best friends, as they're wonderful people. They like other people, and he has a zillion dollars; he's the president of a great big company, but they're just good people.

So anyway, everybody liked them, and they worked hard, and they grinned and enjoyed it. He got about halfway across the country or maybe two-thirds, and he came down this hill, and somethin' happened. Oh, he had some ice, and it was slippery. It was something could've happened to anybody. It was almost like black ice, and he wasn't goin' fast. But anyway, he slid into the street and got hit by another car— by a modern car, and it banged his Oldsmobile up and it hit him in the front. It bent the radiator, and of course, the radiator leaked; and it bent the frame, and, say it was on the left side, it bent the frame and broke his left front wheel and ruined his left front fender. And here it is, and the tour goes the next day. And that's a month's work at the best. And so what do we do? And this friend of mine, Tom Lester, he's an engineer and a good guy, and he and a few others got together and said, "Hey, let's fix Jim Conants's car. I didn't even know about it, and they didn't call on me 'cause I can't fix anything. I didn't hear about it till the next morning. About four or five of the good mechanics got together, and they took that car and they straightened the frame, and they made a wheel, and they fixed the radiator. So the next morning when the tour started, the Oldsmobile was on the tour, and of course, it looked kinda bad where it had been banged up, but it ran fine, and they

completed the run. That was a good example of how people help others. There was a lot of that during the run. That is not only in old cars; I think it's in everything, where maybe you're competitors, but on the other hand [if] the fella needs a bearing and you have one, why you'll let him have it.

What's your favorite club?

Oh, I think I like the Franklin Club the best because of the Franklin car, and I'm closest to it. But I liked the Horseless Carriage Club very much when I was in it. But now like I know the present president of the Franklin Club and all the past presidents and all the members. I think it's the one you're closest to.

The Veteran Car Club of Britain on the Brighton Run, which is a once-a-year thing—but it's so wonderful and they do things so well. The Franklin Club, I guess, 'cause I'm closest to it.

Who are the other leaders in the Franklin Club that make you like that?

Oh, there's a Tom Hubbard, who's the Franklin authority (I think I mentioned him earlier) from Tucson. He was one of the founders. I didn't get in the Franklin Club till after it'd been founded. I never met H. H. Franklin either, who did attend some of their meetings before he died. And they're some of the old Franklin engineers, and just run-of-the-mill people. I study up a little on their names 'cause I have trouble with names. There's one fella especially there I remember, and he's there every year; he's from the Chicago area, and he loves Franklins. He has one; he took it there only once. And every year I see him, I say, "Where's your car?"

“Well, it’s a long ways from Chicago.” In fact, it’s quite an effort for he and his wife to get there. But what I get a kick out of ’em is, they’re just the nicest people you ever met. When we get there, we usually have three cars, and they’re cars they’ve never seen before at the Trek. So the people gather round, da da da da da da da, and this fella (his name’s Rayberg; I can’t remember his first name), he will be there right with the rest, but he always stands in the background. And after everybody’s looked everything over and everybody’s said hello and everybody shook hands—this may be a day later—finally when there’s nobody around, he’ll come over and he’ll put his hand out—“Hello, Bill. Glad to see you again.”

I’m sure that isn’t the reason he comes; he comes because he likes the meet, but he’s so polite and so—and there’re so many pushy people in the world. It’s so refreshing to see someone like him. But he stands back there, and he’s so polite, and he’ll look, and finally when there’s no one around—well, he’ll start over. And someone else’ll walk up and he’ll back right away. But when his turn comes, over he comes.

He has a Franklin like my father’s first Franklin, which is a Nine-B sedan. So when I see him, I always say, “How’s your Nine-B sedan?” I tried to buy it one time; I didn’t have one. And he was so polite. He told me no, he did want to, but he’d gotten it years ago and it was his only car and it was a very good one. I’m so glad he didn’t sell it to me cause I later found one and did it. And he hated to say no, but he said no.

Well, most of the clubs, the car clubs, the cars are the thing. I guess in other places, the club’s the thing, and people get so involved. Then we have a few that are involved in the activities, but the club is kind of a necessary evil to get the thing to—you know. You have to have a president and a secretary to do things,

but the car and the camaraderie is the thing, and the club is just the vehicle to kinda hang it together. And that is bad; you’ve no doubt seen it in dog or horse clubs or something, when they get so involved and so political that they miss what it’s all about. I don’t mean that derogatory ’cause I’ve seen it in car clubs. But I’ve heard that does happen—well, I think it happens in any kind of a club. We have some in the car clubs, that really aren’t car people, and of course, we come out and say so. We say, “What do you think of So-and—?” He’s not really a car guy. He’s in it because he likes to be the president, or he likes to be the secretary, or he likes to make dumb speeches. But that’s people; that’s human nature.

Our little Horseless Carriage Club here got that way finally. It started out real good. ’course, I dominated it which didn’t help any—well, it helped it get going, and then maybe I was too active for a while. And it kinda died a little bit, and then when I got clear out of it, I just—. I never quit my membership or anything, but I just didn’t have the time to go. It kinda survived on its own and kinda took a little different direction, and it’s a real healthy little club now. It’s a fine club. There’s no one dominates it at all. A lot of people, a lot of members do a lot of unselfish work. Those dinners, they just order the dinner, but someone has to arrange for the place and try to get a decent price. Then at the meeting, they’ll have little games they play that they have to make up, and things like that. It’s a lot of work goes into that—you know, nobody gets paid for anything— all for the good of the club, which you can’t forget that.

At one time the Horseless Carriage group was very interested in costumes and so forth. Are they still?

No. The Horseless Carriage Club, the national club, is the only club that—and we

were active in that. My former wife, Scherry, really loved the costumes. And we dug out a lot of 'em; she worked real hard at it. We didn't have any children. That was kinda her thing, and she did a good job—and the other ladies. It evolved, and not only because of us, the Horseless Carriage Club is the only club that on national and some of the local meets, the costumes are either mandatory or requested, where most of the other clubs forget it, no interest. So that's the outstanding part about the Horseless Carriage Club. It's some trouble, but it is nice, once you get into it. It's easy to criticize from the outside. But like I have my four or five outfits that I've had over the years, and as they get older, they look better. And they fit me and I'm comfortable in 'em, and I'm just as comfortable in my old clothes as I am in my new ones. And it goes with the car—drive the car down the road, and it all fits very well. But it's trouble to dig 'em out and fix 'em and all. But it can be done.

And the ladies, of course—the costumes of about 1907 to 1910, the ladies' costumes are very flattering to ladies, you know, 'cause the shoulders and the small waist and the long skirt and the big hats, you know. It takes a pretty awful-lookin' lady not to look good in those things if they're done right. They're very flattering.

RALLYES AND TOURS ON THE AUTOMOBILE CIRCUIT

Maybe you'd like to talk about the rallyes, some of these classic things that you have participated in building up over the years.

Oh [chuckling], yeah. Well, a rallye—which they don't have in United States but they have in most other countries. They had a rallye in South Africa, and they have them—in Australia, it was a rallye, there's a

lot of kiddin' back and forth, you know. And today, going to Australia for the—did I tell you about that?—to a rallye in April.

And the newest car you can take is a 1930. So I studied the Collection; I wanted a sporty car. We drive I think thirteen or eleven hundred miles from Sydney to—it's the other way. What is it when you go north from Sydney? What's the big town? [Brisbane]

[We went with] friends of ours (Verna's and I) —very close friends from Cleveland. He's an old car guy, Tom Lester and Shirley Lester. Tom and I have been friends for twenty years, I guess—close friends. And I've known Shirley for twenty years, and she's okay—until recently. And then Verna—see, Verna and I've been married four years—and then she met the Lesters, and she and Shirley just hit it off. They're excellent girlfriends. And I think if Tom and I didn't exist and they'd met, they would've liked each other. They're just a couple of people that think alike and make jokes alike and—. So they just get along super, and Tom and I get along super; so we're very close friends. I think they're the closest friends we have.

But anyway—and bein' a car guy and this run came up—and we've been on some before and—. Fact, well, two years ago there was a cross-country from Seattle to Philadelphia. And we were on that (Verna and I), and Tom was on that, but Shirley didn't go. She had dinner with us, but she doesn't really care for cars. And in the past, Tom's been on many runs where I was on, and I always had a girlfriend or a wife. And Shirley wouldn't show; she's always gonna show, but she wouldn't show. She just didn't really like it.

So when this run came up, and Tom wanted to go, and then Verna and I knew Shirley. And we said, "Well, Shirley, you won't ride in the car. You'll just sit in the motel," and this and that.

And she said, “No,” she said, “I’ll go!” She says, “I know it means a lot to you, and it means a lot to Tom, and,” she said, “I will do it.” And she’s the kind of person, when she says she’ll do it, she’ll do it. So we’re all going.

But anyway, I looked the Collection over, and I want to—they’ll be lookin’ at us, these Americans, and they’ll be lookin’ at me, the “big collector.” So, I have to have something kinda special. So, I took Verna out, and I showed her about ten cars that qualified. They were kinda sporty and pretty fast. So, she looked ’em all over, and she picked this ’27 Stutz, which we’re takin’. And it is a real pretty car. But the fun of the story is Tom Lester was taking a ’29 Auburn. And my Stutz’ll go eighty miles an hour, and his Auburn will only go sixty-eight miles [laughs]! But he didn’t know yet. He suspected, of course, because, see, the cars are shipped from San Francisco. So we told him, said—see, and our truck runs back and forth ’cause we’re buying and selling cars—said, “Tom, we’ll take your car to Reno for you, and we’ll take it down and put it on the ship for you,” which is a big help to him because there’s a lot of papers to sign and this and that, and we have our guys do it all the time; so it’s no big deal, and it was a sincere thing. But of course, Tom knew that when his car got to Reno, we’d try it out. And of course, I told him, no, I wouldn’t try it out. But we did try it out, which he really knew. He doesn’t know it happened, but he knew we would ’cause—. And then the guys, they tried it out, and then I tried it out. And it will do sixty-eight; it’s a pretty good car. See, I’m a pretty good crook, I guess. So our guys are drivin’ it all around, and I said, “Well, what was the mileage when it got—.” And fortunately, they remembered what the mileage was. But they hadn’t disconnected the speedometer, so I said, “Well, gee, Tom gets his car back and it’s got ten miles on it, he’s gonna know we tried

it out.” So, we set the speedometer first thing, and he said, “Gee, well, maybe they didn’t drive it.” And then [I thought] later, about halfway through the tour, when he’s not doin’ too good some day, and I’ll pass him. See I don’t pass him right away; I wait my chance and then pass him when there’s a lot of people around. And then when I do, why, then I’ll say, “Well, gee, Tom, I passed you.”

And he’ll—“You’re goddam right you did!”

And then I say, “Well, when I tried it out in Reno, it wouldn’t go—.” And then go, “Oh! Well, gee, I forgot.”

The course on the cross-country I had a Thomas that would go eighty-five, I guess—a 1909 Thomas would go over eighty. And he had a 1908 Mercedes that was a real hot dog. It had really a racing engine in it, which was kinda legal. And it would—I guess ninety miles an hour. I knew he could beat me. So, whenever you know somebody can beat you, you don’t get in a race. You know, never overmatch yourself. But then what you do is catch ’im asleep. And I think I only did it twice in the whole run, and that’s three thousand miles—thirty-five hundred. But twice I think I caught him where I come over a hill at sixty miles an hour, and here’s Tom idling or just started out and he’s doing forty or something. And of course, he can see me coming, but I can pass him before he can get speed up, so—. And then, of course, I’ll slow down, and then I tell everybody that I passed Tom Lester and hope that a lot of people’ll see me, but that’s part of the thing. But it is a lot of fun.

So the one in Australia where we just returned from [April, 19781—that was a rallye, also. But down there, I’d say about there were four hundred and some cars. And I’d say again, less than ten percent even cared about it, paid any attention to it. And then they didn’t play it down either. In their literature and all, they said, “This is a rallye, but if you

don't care about it, why don't bother with it," which was nice.

There was another car there—friends of ours—and so when I say “we,” I mean the four of us, generally. We went through the motions, and my friend kinda gave up on it after about the first day, but I still tried to do it, but not too hard. And it makes it very pleasant just to drive along, and you know where you're going and all, so it was very enjoyable. There were over four hundred cars, I guess I mentioned.

They had excellent accommodations and excellent—well, I mean, as good as you can have anywhere. You know, you had nice motel room, and some were cleaner than others, but they were all pretty good. And you had confirmed reservations; we made a deposit. And so you got there, you had your room; there was no question. Quite often they walked in—why, they just handed you the key; they knew who—you know, all I had to say was “Harrah,” and they handed me a key, which was very nice.

And the other good thing they did (it was about eleven hundred miles)—but the tour chairman, who we got to know very well (he and his wife—wonderful people)—and they had sheets of directions on each day, and they were dated, you know, April twelfth, and you went from here to here. There may be several pages, and it would start out; you know, you knew where there was a starting point every day, which was right near where you were staying. You knew where that was. So you went to the starting point any time after eight o'clock in the morning. And then it would say, “Drive two point four miles and there'll be a So-and-so gas station on the left, and drive another five-tenths miles and turn right at Highway Number So-and-so.” And they were very accurate. I'd say they were ninety-nine percent accurate.

So Verna, that was her job, and she just loved it. And it made it so easy for me, too, 'cause driving on the left isn't really difficult after you've done it quite a bit, which I have. But you're watching very carefully, you know, 'cause you got to remember—. And so I'm busy driving, and it was so easy because I didn't have to worry. And she'd say, “Well, see the gas—turn right, there; turn left there.” Then she'd say, “It's sixteen miles straight ahead. Don't worry about it.” So we'd just go and enjoy ourselves. So it was very nice.

They had some lunch stops; they gave us tickets for various lunches, which we went to one or two, but you usually had to stand in line. They were fun, but we did 'em, you know, to be nice, and also they were kinda fun, and the food was always real good. But usually we would just stop along the race, you know, someplace. Nearly every gas station there was also a restaurant. There were just— it was customary—a little, you know, like a hot dog, hamburger place. So quite often we'd get gas, and it would look kinda nice; we'd just go in and have lunch. So it was very enjoyable. And a rallye, it's not only antique cars; lots of sports cars have rallyes, modern sports cars. I don't really understand it too well; it doesn't make too much sense to me, but it's kind of a skill in driving, to drive from point A to point B at a certain speed, rather consistent speed, which still doesn't make sense to me. I guess I'm knockin' it, but maybe if I understood it, I wouldn't knock it. But they make a big—the real true rallye enthusiasts, which— South Africa was a rallye, and there were a hundred cars on it; and ten percent of the cars (ten cars) were really into the thing, and the other ninety cars couldn't care less about it. They didn't bother with it. So it's kind of for people that like to.

You're supposed to estimate your speed. They say (you have instructions), and it says,

“Drive thirty-seven miles an hour for four miles.” And they cover your speedometer, so you can’t tell how fast you’re going; so you’re supposed to be able to judge the thirty-seven miles an hour for four miles. Then’ it says, “Drive twenty-two miles an hour for one mile,” and so on. And you’re supposed to follow that exactly by bein’ such a good judge. And you can have stopwatches and things, for what that’s worth. I may be missin’ the point entirely, but it’s a “so what?” thing as far as I’m concerned.

And in South Africa, the man that won it, he and his wife, they tried very hard. In fact, his wife told Verna she lost ten pounds worrying about how they were doing and all the—you know, it was very complicated. And then the way he did it, he told me, the telephone poles were spaced so far apart there, and he’d measure them so he could tell how fast he was going by counting the telephone poles and then dividin’ it in his head somehow, or with his stopwatch. So it’s all right—if you like it, it’s okay.

So that’s about it. As far as little two-day affairs around here, every year we have one or two of those, which are fun. We have one up in Idaho; the Horseless Carriage Club puts on a national tour. That’s a western club, and the headquarters in Los Angeles. I used to be very active on the board of directors and everything. They have an annual tour somewhere in the West; it’s usually in the L.A. area, but they move it around.

I think it was two years ago they had it in Idaho, which just fit in with my plans perfectly. And it started in Sun Valley, and they drove up to—well, they drove in various directions from Sun Valley; it was kind of a hub tour for three or four days. And we went on it, of course. But they had plans to go over the summit, Galena summit [Galena Peak], to Redfish Lake, which is very near Stanley.

So I suggested to them that they’re goin’ that far, they should come to Stanley for lunch; and we (or Harrah’s Automobile Collection) sponsored the lunch. And it was done very well; we did it real neat. We just took a lot of stuff up there, and Joe Fanelli, our food man, put it on, and it was the best lunch of the tour, without any doubt. We had it on the lawn of my home up there, and that was almost the highlight of the tour.

I thought there wasn’t any road in up there to the Lodge.

No, to the Middle Fork Lodge—you gotta get that clear. See, Stanley is a little town—I have a home there. And that’s where we have a gas station, a whole bunch of stuff. You drive there; that’s on the highway. And then Middle Fork Lodge—that’s entirely separate; that’s about sixty miles north of Stanley. You have to fly in there. And then Sun Valley, you know what that is—that’s sixty miles south of Stanley.

Do you plan one of these rallyes yourself? Have you tried to lay out a track or something like that for them?

No. No, I don’t like rallyes. I would never put one on. When they have one and if it’s new country and all, I love to go, and it’s no big thing, you know. You can fake it, which everybody does. But that’s real important to take it, not to say, “Oh, it’s dumb,” although in Australia they weren’t as touchy. But in South Africa, if you said it was silly, why you were an outcast. You had to really pretend like it was a lot of fun.

But as far as the old car movement and all is concerned, that’s really not necessarily old cars. Like I said, it’s modern cars, which is one other thing. And it gives people somethin’—I

mean, I'm not knockin' it, like the MG Club or somethin' in San Francisco—gonna have a rallye some Sunday, well, why not? If they like it, why it gives 'em an excuse to get their cars out and run 'em, so—why not? It's okay.

Maybe it's because you really like to drive fast.

No, I don't know about that. That puzzled me, that twenty-seven and thirty-three and— - I think the highest speed they had was forty. And then there were some unlimited, where you could go as fast as you wanted, but still if you got to the point before a certain time, then you lost points. But like the fella that won in South Africa—and he'd been in a lot of 'em; he knew what he was doin'—but he drove pretty good sometimes, so I don't know. I think it's more a navigating thing. It's okay. But I guess you've gathered it just doesn't interest me [laughing]!

Well, racing is probably a lot more fun!

Oh yeah, we raced a little in Australia. I had this friend [Tom Lester] and he had an Auburn, and he thought it was fast, and [it] really wasn't. But he sent it out here and we tested it out. And I knew it's a smaller car than my Stutz, so I knew I could beat him. He wanted to race the whole rallye. And I didn't want to because, well, it was not very smart because we had eleven hundred miles, and if you race the first day, you could blow your car up. So we drove until I think the day before the last day, and then I found a place where it was opportune, so I raced him or I passed him, and he tried to catch me—he couldn't. It was kinda fun 'cause he's the—there're a lot of people like that, but he admits it—that he just hates to have anybody pass him, you know, and not be able to pass him back again. It just drives him crazy. He chased me a long ways,

and he finally caught me, but I slowed down, so—.

Which ones do you really like to drive in these exhibition or racing or rallye things?

Well, it depends. I always pick a car for the rallye. Like on the cross-country, the year was 1914—was the newest you could have. And the earlier car you had, the easier it was to get trophies and things. So we picked a 1909 Thomas, and the reason for that was it was a powerful car and cruised sixty, sixty-five all day, no trouble, and excellent performing car. I particularly like Thomas. So that was the reason for that one. And this rallye in Australia, it was up to 1931, and a later car is easier to drive. And as it was a new tour for us, we wanted to look at the country. Like we do on all these tours and rallyes, I pick about ten cars that would be excellent for the purpose; and then Verna and I go out and take a look, and she likes to—you know, I let her pick it. And she picked the Stutz because it was—she likes a show-looking car, and well, the combination really is one that I like to drive and one that really attracts attention, which is nice: you park ten cars, and there's the one that—"Oooh, look at that one!" You know, it's fun to have.

There's a North-South rallye—the East-West (Seattle to Philadelphia). The same fella that puts it on, he puts one on every four years, but he moved it up so it'll be next year. It's limited to fifty cars by invitation, and he's always full because it's so much fun. And this coming one is from Key West up to Canada, and we're going on that, of course. We haven't picked the car yet; we've narrowed it down to two or three, and we're in the process of pickin' one for that. Fact, we picked one; then I had second thoughts, so we're gonna take another look. But it'll probably be a Stearns, but could

be somethin' else. Well, that is nice— the Collection I like very much, as you know. It's really super on a tour—you have so many to pick from.

There's always something. And like I said, I never take the same car, 'cause why not give 'em all a breather.

What makes you decide?

See, the earlier, the better you know, other things being equal. So like we took a 1909 Thomas. We have a 1908 Stearns that's more powerful than the Thomas; it's a ninety-mile-an-hour car, a real swinging car. And we were gonna take that one, and then after we decided that, we acquired a 1907 Stearns, which is a year earlier, and it's four cylinder, and it's sixty-mile-an-hour car—no problem. It's not as fast as the eight, which is maybe not too important. It has a little more room, and it's still plenty fast. And you're a year earlier, which is an advantage; so I think just Verna and I'll go out and maybe look at the two of 'em and say, "Well, hey, which one?" and, you know, just make the decision.

RACE CARS AND DRIVERS

Do you associate with racing people in the same way as with collectors?

Yeah, I know Bobby Unser. I've admired him for years, and he's a super—and he's no kid any more; he's forty-five. And he's as good as any of 'em. He's won Indianapolis twice. But the way I met him is, I admired him for years, but he and his mother had a Voisin (v-o-i-s-i-n, I think [checking for papers]). Well, we bought it. Well, it was a very rare Voisin. They're kinda rare anyway, and usually they're very ugly. And that's, I believe a French car by the name, with a

sleeve valve motor. But they're very ugly. And they had a very beautiful sporty model we'd heard about, and we tried to buy it. And it wasn't for sale; they weren't sure who owned it. Finally it evolved—see, there's Bobby and Al. They weren't exactly sure, but they got it straightened out. So Bobby and his mother owned it. And we made a deal with them for it. And I met him once or twice during the deal, although I didn't do the negotiating. But he wanted—of all things he wanted some money and he wanted a '32 Ford V8 three-window coupe. He knew exactly what he wanted. And it had to be original—I mean no modifications and no modernization that could be restored, So we looked and looked and looked and looked and looked and looked. And this deal went on for a year or so. And we'd find one. He wouldn't take money alone. It had to be money and the Ford. And we found one, and no, it wasn't good enough, 'cause most of 'em are modified; they have a later engine. It'll be a flathead Ford, but it'll be a '35 Ford in a '32. You know, we were honest people—we've got this one, but it's a '35 eng—no, he wanted a '32 engine, quite properly.

So it just went on and on and on, and finally we found one. It was real good—correct engine, correct this and that. But I think instead of a three-window, it was a five-window. But it was an excellent car! And the price was in the ballpark. So we told him, and then I thought. I remember my guys—and I didn't talk to him directly on that exact—of course. But they said, "Gee, he's gonna turn this down because it's a five-window instead of a three-window."

And I said, "Well, try it."

And he tried it, and he said, "Oh gee, you guys have worked so hard." He said, "I can live with a five-window," so we made the deal. And I've seen him once or twice at various races.

And I know Parnelli Jones, who no longer drives. I know Peter DePaolo, who drove in '25. In fact, I duck him a little bit. He's always in Indianapolis. He stays at the motel where I stay, but Peter's the kind of guy that you can't get away from. When you see him comin', you kinda—maybe we shouldn't put that in the story, but—. I like him very much, but just—if you're short of time, don't say hello to Pete [laughs]. He doesn't have enough to do—one of those.

Let's see, who else do I know? I know Stirling Moss. He's a British driver that was never a champion of the world, but he easily could've been.

And of course, I know Phil Hill, who is the only American world's champion (that's Grand Prix driver). And he's also an antique car guy. I think he's the one I mentioned earlier about the bidding at an auction one time?

Yeah, Phil—he's a Packard collector. He has a wonderful Packard collection. We have a good one—well, we have a better one than he does, but he has some rare body styles. And he had a wealthy mother and a wealthy aunt that had them, and they kept the cars, fortunately, so he has them now. He has a wonderful collection. But he's a real car guy if you ever met one. And he was world champion at one time. And he retired, fortunately, before he got hurt. And drove for Ferrari when he won it, which made us very close.

But anyway, I was at an auction in Massachusetts one time, and it was a Packard collector had died. And my Packard collection or our Packard collection was just gettin' goin', but the early ones we didn't have. We had 1900, and we had 1903, and I think we had 1904; but we didn't have 1906, and we didn't have 1908, and we didn't have a 1911. For about five years there we didn't have—and these were all for sale at this auction. So oh

boy, I'm all excited. And I went to the auction, and I ran into Phil Hill. And, "Oh hi, Phil. How are you?"

And I said, "What are you doin' here?"

And he said, "Oh, I'm just lookin' around."

And he said, "How do you do this?"

And I said, "Well, don't you know?"

And he said, "No, I've never been at an auction before."

So I said, "Well, you just bid and—." So then I kinda forgot about it.

So they came out, and the first—they went by years, fortunately. And I've learned something at auctions: the early bid—any auction—when an auction first starts out, the first few sales (maybe the first ten or fifteen) the crowd really isn't in it. Some people are late; some people aren't payin' too much attention and they're talking or they're drinkin' their coffee. So there may be some bargains, then, 'cause people aren't at the best. So fortunately, they went by years, which was a dumb thing to do because the older ones were the rarer ones.

So they started out, and I think the first one's a—which we needed badly—was an '06. And I bid, and I think I went to nine thousand dollars, which was a lot of money, but of course, it really wasn't. But the people that early in the auction weren't thinkin' in nine thousand numbers; they were thinkin' in two thousand numbers. And in fact, the car was, well, I got that car. And then the next one I think maybe was the '08. And then I think they jumped around a little.

In the meantime, I think I bumped into Phil again, and he was real nervous. He's a real uptight little fella. And he said, "Well, Bill," he said, "I don't know—how do you—?"

I said, "Well, if you want somethin' and you really want it, you just gotta keep biddin'."

and just stay with it and don't get scared out—buy it!”

So anyway, up came this '11 Packard, and it wasn't the best one in the world, but it was an '11 Packard, and we didn't have one. And I'd never been able to find one. They're not the rarest car, but they're kinda rare. And this was a cute little car. So it was maybe a five-thousand-dollar car. So it started out at two, and I bid two, and twenty-five hundred, three thousand, thirty-five, four, forty-five, five—. I thought, “Well, I'll get the car.”

So the auctioneer—“Fifty-five!” Like Sterling Moss, when he was racing, he didn't really care; you know, that car, that's last years race car. There's nothing more uninteresting to a race driver than last year's race car. But then when it gets twenty years old, it has some interest. But it was always the new. But several of 'em—Stirling and I think even Phil Hill—although I think he was always interested—when they kind of get out of it, then they get more interested in the history of it. But when they're in it, it's very competitive, of course—extremely competitive—and you want the very best car. And then when that one's a little better, the one is zero, and here we got this.

I admire race drivers, and not their bravery (whatever you call—), but their excellent skill, that just that they can drive that car around that—. You know, it doesn't take nerve at all; it takes ability. Like Stirling Moss said it better than anybody: you know, what makes a great race driver? And he said, “Well, it's the timing.” And he said, “Here's a corner, and the car can go around that corner—the absolute is one hundred miles an hour.” So he said, “If you drive around that corner at ninety-five miles an hour, you're gonna make the turn all right, but you're not gonna win the race. If you go around that corner or try to go around a hundred and

one miles an hour, you're gonna run of if the road. So what you want to do—nothin' to go down the straightaway; anybody can go down the straightaway. But on the turn—,” and he said, “If you can go around that corner at ninety-nine point nine [99.9] miles an hour, you have a chance of winnin' the race.” You have to be right on the very edge—they call it “the edge”—on the very edge of running of f. And that's how you win the race. And to be able to judge that—. It's like how far you get into the turn, they say, before you brake. You know, you get right into there, and maybe you an' me—we brake here, but they'll go right up to there and brake and make the turn. And then somebody—“Well, I'll go a little further.” They go a little further and they won't make the turn because they went too far, but it's that exact.

That's just the coordination that's built in you. I don't think you can acquire that; I think you just either have it or you don't. And there's usually twenty to thirty Grand Prix drivers—good ones—in the world. You know, they have to be in their twenties or early thirties. And this is like Bobby Unser couldn't do that. See, he's Indianapolis, where it doesn't take much coordination. But the real Grand Prix stuff, well, maybe thirty-five—that's about the end of that. And there's maybe thirty to forty people in the world that are actually into that that are good enough to compete. So that's why I admire it so much. It just takes a tremendous skill, plus the—your reflexes are just—you know, and there is a different speed in that.

Ken Purdy wrote a lot about Stirling Moss. He was and he felt that Stirling had quicker reflexes than anybody ever, which I kinda think he did. Plus he had tremendous eyesight. He could see more than the ordinary person—not twenty-twenty; he could see just like he had binoculars on his head or something—just tremendous.

It really does take an athlete's "tuning," somehow.

Well, you don't have to be super strong. There's a lot of little guys that—well, Phil Hill's a little guy; Stirling Moss is a little fella. You know, they're husky but they're not heavy. When in their prime, they were maybe a hundred and forty, a hundred and fifty pounds—little guys. In fact, a little guy's an advantage—fits in better and [chuckles] whole thing—less weight.

Do you think of moving into racing cars or maybe even sponsoring a car Indianapolis?

Oh, I've thought about it, and we might do it. 'course, I rather doubt it now with our company, as Harrah's is a public company, and so there's many things you can't do that you—you know, they're fun things. Like when we sponsored boat racing—and we were a corporation, but we could defend it as a business. But with public owners, you know—. And it costs a hundred thousand a year, and they could say, "Well, for a hundred thousand, are we really gettin' a hundred thousand in return?" If they didn't enjoy it, why you're not really, of course, in advertising, so—. If you get into that—and it's so expensive, racing—you would have to be—'course, possibly the car companies could do it. But if we did that, it would be more in something possibly Ferrari might want us to do, which they've never requested 'cause they handle their own racing team, which is a good thing for everybody. But at one time we did sponsor a Ferrari or two—or a little more than that. But it's quite a business. I like it, but it'd take a lot of time, a lot of money. I wouldn't say positively no, but I rather doubt it. And then it would be real bad to get involved and have a good driver, and you got to be friends and then he got injured

or killed— why, you would—it could leave a real bad taste.

And boat racing—we didn't hurt anyone. But there were quite a few drivers killed that I knew. In fact, my former driver got killed, and I was there at the time. But he wasn't—you know, I didn't feel at all guilty or anything 'cause he—we parted (you're always as friendly as you can when you part; you hire somebody else) —but he'd gone for another company and got himself killed. And sure I felt bad, but if it'd been my boat, I would have felt real bad.

But you think of racing as a real whole other branch of the car collection?

Yeah. Oh, we have—in the Collection we have a race car collection. And we have everything from 1903 up through, oh, 1975 or '6, which the dragsters are the big thing today. And we have some Indianapolis cars; 'course they're about six or eight years old. And we would like to have a newer one, which we'll probably get—or no, we have a much later one. So we have race cars in the Collection, and modern race cars. And then the dragsters—we have two of those, which is the today race car, all of 'em.

SOME THOUGHTS ON CIVIC AFFAIRS

Would you like to talk about some of the clubs and organizations that you enjoy and what you do in them?

Oh. Well, I don't really enjoy organizations. My college fraternity, Phi Delta Theta, I'm very fond of that because of what it did for me. I was kind of a timid, bashful, extremely shy kid, and they took me and—by they, I mean the fraternity; it's just by its principles, and did me tremendous amount of good. And so I've always been very fond of it, and was instrumental in gettin' it started here at the University.

But, like I was in the Elks here. I got talked into that. Virgil Smith and that gang all belonged to the Elks, Harlan Heward, who was my attorney, and he loved the Elks. And they all-—"Bill, you ought to be in the Elks." And okay, I joined the Elks, and it was not for me at all! That pomp and stuff—it was kinda corny, I thought, and it may be all right (I don't know), but I just thought it was corny. And you had to be there every Thursday or somethin', and once a year the big thing; and I just hated it.

And Harlan and I were such good friends that—he might've been gone by then. Then I think it was Bruce, and I don't know if he was an Elk or not, but someone who was an Elk that I respected (it might have been George Vargas). And I said, "I just—I'm not—it doesn't belong to me; I don't want to get people mad at me, and I know you're in it for life. And what can I do?" And I feel guilty; they send me a notice, you didn't go to the meeting last month, and da da da da da.

And so there was a thing, you could take inactive membership. And you had to apply for it, and it was done very quietly. And you were honorable; but when you died, and then you wouldn't go to the Chapter Grand or whatever it is, but you would be—what's the word—"honorable discharge," put it that way. Only you were never really discharged, but you were just inactive.

So then Chamber and that sort of thing, I was never too active in that. I was a little bit, but we'd get in somethin' new, and—I've been to many Chamber meetings with Charlie Mapes, where he showed up an hour late.

But various promotion committees—I was on some of that stuff. All that is baloney now or whatever. There are other people that do that.

And then the Nevada Safety Council, I was very active in that. That was for selfish reasons; that was to keep the speed limit out of Nevada.

Do you go up to the Prospectors?

I was in that to start. I was very flattered—Eddie Questa got me in that. I was a charter member, and I was just a young punk around town. And when I was invited to join that, I was really thrilled and thought, “Boy, I’ve arrived.” And I couldn’t resist finding out who did it. And it was Eddie Questa. I was a charter member. I still belong, and I’m not anti, but I have my own private dining room that I 90 to. I have lunch with Bob, or like today I had it with. Bob and Mead Dixon, and whoever. And people don’t bug me. And, ’course, at the Prospectors they’re not too bad, although there’s a few guys around that’ll try and sell me somethin’ or some. And you know, I’ve been around long enough, I can handle that. Generally, I enjoy going there, but I get the same food or better where I eat, and it’s handy. I think if I wasn’t associated here, if my car agency was my business or something, I’d probably go to the Prospectors quite often for lunch. Maybe sell a car to somebody.

That’s a good organization, though. It’s been good right from the start, I think. It’s been run good. When I was drinkin’ in the old days, I was there a lot [laughs].

What do you think is the purpose of these organizations?

I think they have some good done—most of ’em. What is it—the Shriners are

so active in crippled children. And I think most of ’em have a good purpose. I know the Elks has, Shriners too. I don’t know if the Prospectors do anything charitable. I’d say most of ’em—the Kiwanis and the—I think they all have their good—yes. Junior Chamber—I think—I’ve got respect for them. I have respect for the Chamber, too. There’s chambers and chambers; I’ve been in good ones and bad ones, and in the same town they can vary from year to year, and—well, all organizations can. Some chambers are just a pain, and then some chambers are real good. You know, you get maybe a guy like Mapes or somebody that can get control of something like that for a period, and maybe has some board members that are friendly to him, and pretty soon before you know it, and you got somethin’, and then it’s doin’ things that you can’t understand why. And it’s—someone has taken—I shouldn’t use Charlie’s name; I use it too much—but just a selfish person will take it and warp it around to their own—. Like the Horseless Carriage Club, that happened. I think I told you that story about Bothwell, and he just turned it around till it was his pet baby. And people were asleep; they didn’t realize it had happened to ’em.

How are they going now with the Chamber? A number of your people are into all of these organizations.

Yeah, I don’t know; I assume it’s all right, or I probably would’ve heard something. I’m usually disappointed when I read the list of directors of the organizations, if there aren’t some Harrah’s people on it. I don’t know if we’re doin’ enough or not. I encourage it, and I know we’re better than we were. At one time we were pretty bad. But I think we’re better, but I don’t know if we’re good as we should be.

How about some of the awards that you have received? One day when we didn't have the tape on, and I asked you about the Distinguished Nevadan, you were telling me about an attitude toward the Distinguished Nevadan; you were a little bit entertained that they kept asking you to come back for the commencements because they had awarded you this.

Well, I wasn't amused; I felt obligated when I accepted that, that I was supposed to 90. But still if I'd gone—and I never did go—but if I had've gone, I'd've felt kind of silly up there. So I got an award five years ago, why am I sittin' there for, you know. So I didn't really—I loved to get the award, yes. But I didn't feel I should show up every year because I got an award once. No, I was really thrilled with that, I really was. And I got a lot of compliments from people, you know, relatives, and—. Yeah, that was good, that was real nice. Although I hated the ceremony [laughing]!

Your dislike for the ceremonial things.

Oh, that's awful! Just wish you could be anywhere else in the world.

Well, I was nominated for—Lloyd [Dyer] told me yesterday— for the—by somebody—he told me who, but this is a self-made man, doesn't live here. It's the Horatio Alger Award. Did you ever hear of that? And he said the only other one from Nevada was Bill Lear. And, was I—?

I said, "Yeah, I suppose."

And he—"Well, yeah," he said, "that's real good."

And I said, "What does it mean?"

And he said, "Well, 'rags to riches,' that sort of thing."

And I said, "Well, then I don't deserve it."

And he said, "Why do you say that?"

And I said, "Well, yeah, my father was worth half a million dollars at one time.

And he said, "Yeah, but he didn't give any to you!" [Laughs]

I said, "No, but he gave me a lot of good advice; I'll say that."

So anyway, I think next January or somethin'.

MY FAMILY AND SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT MY LIFE

Tell me about your family, about your children and their accomplishments. And you have mentioned Mrs. Harrah from time to time. I didn't know just how much you wanted to put in, but I think it's nice to tell about them.

Oh, sure. No, I don't mind. Yeah, she's real neat. She's my—mmmm—seventh wife, really. Publicly, I say sixth 'cause the first one was kind of a—well, a lot of 'em are bummers, but it was so long ago and so far back that I just left it out.

I like being married, and so I found somebody I cared for, why, I would get married. And some were pretty good, like my marriage to Scherry was real good for—let's see, that was twenty years, I think. Fifteen years were very good, and then it just—we drifted apart.

And then Bobby Gentry was really fun, and we're still real good friends, but that was a career problem—just two heavy careers. And I've noticed since then, since our split, that other families where there's two big careers, it just doesn't work. Somebody has to give up

something. She wasn't too good at givin' up anything that way, and it was—didn't work.

And then Mary Berger was kind of a rebound from Bobby. And Roxanne [Carlson]. She was a neat gal till we got married, and then zing—it was a new ball game. I don't know what happened there. But it was real obvious right away.

So then, you know, I was pretty discouraged, and not gettin' any younger, and I met Verna and we clicked right from the start. And we had clicked before with other people, but what Verna had that none of the others had (some had to a small extent; like Scherry did when we were first goin' together), what Verna has today is just it's "us" and "we" and, you know, and—. I spend a lot of money sometimes, and we'll go in and there's a new shoe style she likes, and I want to say, "Why don't you get six pair?"

And, "No, no, maybe two pair," or "maybe one pair," but just [she'd] say, "I don't need six pair," you know, just watches the money real—. And intelligent.

We're very happy, and the reason is, is like most happy marriages, I'm thinking what I can do to please her, and she's thinking what she can do to please me, so it's really a super marriage, just couldn't be better. It's the best marriage I've ever had.

Then I have my two boys that were adopted, as Scherry and I tried for years to have children, and we couldn't; and so we decided—she wanted to adopt long before I did. Old story—oh, no, I wanted my own.

And then, well, they say if you adopt 'em, it's the same thing. Well, sure, maybe it is, and we did adopt 'em, and it's—there's no question it is—it's they're yours; there's no if, ands, or buts. It's just as good, I'm sure.

And I remember little John, of course, was the first one. And I remember we were so happy, Scherry and I, with him. And she said, "Oh, this is so wonderful, isn't it? We should've done this years ago."

And I said, "Oh, no!"

And she said, "Well, why not?"

And I said, "Well, I hate to even think of not having little John." I said, "If we'd done it years ago, we would've missed him." So it's really neat.

And then we wanted two, and we were fortunate in both cases [John and Tony]. I wanted one boy, of course, 'cause I wanted a son and then I wanted to name him after my father, which I did. But in both cases it was arranged with the prospective mother, and we were gonna take what we got. And boy or girl, and well or ill, or crippled—why, that was it; we were the real parents. And of course, we were extra lucky we got two real neat little boys.

And along came Verna with her boy, who's right between mine. He's a real neat little guy. And his father—he never knew his father; he's long gone. Verna's wanting me to adopt him, and that's a real toughie because—and I

wouldn't hesitate in a second, except for my boys. And she's not pushy on it; she just said she would like it. And I know Richard would like it, and it's a tough one for me because if I was one of my boys, and I was one of two, and then all of a sudden there were three, and I'd think, well, what, you know. And if I'd adopted Roxanne's kids, and Mary Berger had two kids, and there could be an awful lot of kids runnin' around. So it's—adoption has to be—you have to be very careful. It's not that, you know—it's real serious business. Right now I'm just kinda keepin' my fingers crossed.

Have you discussed it with John and his brother?

Well, not directly. But they have thought of it, of course. Well, they haven't mentioned it, but there's the—. It's kind of a touchy thing, I guess, and so it's kind of an unspoken thing that everybody knows [chuckling] is there. It's very delicate, and I wish I knew the answer to it. But one of these days it has to be faced up to.

They're all very good kids, aren't they?

Yeah, they're fine. Richie's a real neat little guy. He's done real good down there in school. He adapted, and he needed that—see, he was an only child, and that's a big disadvantage. I hadn't realized it until actually seem' it. You know, I'd know kids that were only children, had some friends that were only children that were good friends of mine. But I never really got to see inside. There were just many days where Tony and John would go to the show, this and that, and Richie'd call somebody and they were busy, and he'd call somebody else, and out of town; and little Richie'd be all by himself in a great big house, and it was just kinda lonesome there bein' the only child.

And of course, it's— can't always plan around that.

What are they interested in?

Oh, Tony's an artist, always has been. He draws constantly. And when he isn't drawing, he's making little clay models of things. Plus he makes little airplanes, and not the kit you buy; he just takes the broken wing off of that plane and the broken wing off of that plane and the motor out of that little toy tractor and puts 'em all together and has a little airplane that almost flies. He's real clever that way.

And John is quite an athlete. He's a good swimmer, good skier, good anything that way—good runner, fair ball player. But then he got into cars; you know, he could—I told you the story on Ken Purdy, didn't I? When John was three years old? If I didn't, I want to tell it.

Ken Purdy is gone now; he was a writer, an automotive writer, and he and I were very good friends. And Ken was the kind of guy you wouldn't hear from for six months, and your phone'd ring, you'd pick it up, it'd be Ken, and you recognized his voice instantly. "What's goin' on? What've you been doin'?" Tell me all about it," da da da da da. And maybe just a visiting call; he wouldn't come out or anything, just "hello." We're friends; we'd talk.

And so he called me one time, and he said, "Hit Haven't seen you in a long time—what's new?"

And I said, "Oh, nothin'." Then I said, "Oh, wait a minute! Yeah," I said, "John drove a car today—first time. He drove a baby Bugatti."

And Ken said, "Well, gee, Bill, isn't he kinda young to be drivin'?"

And I said, "Hell, no! He'll be three tomorrow!" [Laughter] And Ken just—he kids on that story a hundred times!

So he's always driven cars and motorcycles, and he's very good—a little more reckless than

I like, but that's the way it goes. He's the one that didn't get to go to Indy cause he was in Europe. He's gone every year for four or five years. He didn't like that when he didn't get to go, but I took the newspapers back when I went—see, I went right from Indy to get in. And he understood; it's just that you couldn't bring him back for the race and go back for two days more of school, and still he had to stay the two days. He couldn't leave early; that's real bad when you do that, you know. But he's the car guy, the motorcycle guy.

Then Richie's pretty good at—oh, we have snow machines in Idaho, too, and it's all judgment and balance. And Richie can't ride as good as John on the snow machine, but he won't accept that. And it's every year, and every trip during the year (maybe we're there four or five times), and they'll go out and Richie'll kill his engine, he'll have trouble startin' it, and John'll start it for him. And then Richie's a little heavier than John; he's younger, but he's pretty chunky, and his weight's pretty good, but it's up a little. And so he weighs more than John, and John's a better rider, so John'll just beat 'im, beat 'urn, beat 'urn. And then he gets all mad; he'll come in the house, and he has a real temper; you can tell when you see him coming. His face'll be red, and he'll be slamming [gesture] [laughing]! And you know, I'm laughing, but it's not fun at the time 'cause he's really upset. He'll come in, and da da da, he's not gonna ride a snow machine ever again in his life, and just 'cause John can beat 'im. And we try to explain, and 'course Verna gets upset. She—"Well, honey, you weigh a little more than John."

"Oh, I don't weigh much more!"

John just savvies, and Richard doesn't. He's just not mechanical, but he's a very good skier; he skis fine. He swims good. Well, put it this way: I think probably he and Tony are on an even scale—cut things mechanical, I mean

motorcycles and cars; where John is—it's been his thing all his life. So he's superior—and he jumps his motorcycle; he runs, and then it hits a thing, and it goes, you [gesturing motorcycle maneuvers], that kind of stuff. And spins it and stops, you know, puts on the front and back brake and slides sideways and stops, and all those little tricks.

But all three, they're really—they're all healthy, and they're all smart (they're no dummies). Their 105 are, you know, quite satisfactory, so we're very lucky, I think. And, of course, they argue and fight, and three's a bad number, we learned that. We thought, oh boy, we'll take three kids. And that just never works. So sometimes maybe Tony won't go, and so two kids is okay; or if all three of 'em go, then we take another. And Tony or John or anybody can bring a friend. But then they pair off two by two; it's okay. That's a must. And we have taken six, but that's usually, like Tony'll take a friend; then Rich'll want to take a friend—okay. And while they're takin', John'll want to take a friend. Well, then you got too many to start with, and so on. So now it's either two or four, and it works pretty good.

And we have a wonderful time. And Stanley, where we love to go, we added on. The addition is as big as the main house. Each boy has his own bedroom and bathroom, and then we discovered they'd like to sleep in the same rooms after we built it. So then when we got the Sun Valley place, there's this little "kinderhaus," we call it, where the previous owners' kids stayed. And there's four or five bedrooms over there, and we thought of makin' the three. We kinda had to squeeze to get three bedrooms in. So we made one nice bedroom—there's still three, plus security. But the one bedroom, we put three beds in it, and they like that thing. And in Stanley, they're bunk beds and a roll-away cot, and they always—without fail—either in Tony's

room or John's room or Rich's room. And there's one in the bottom and one in the top and one in the roll-away. And they go to bed mad, and they're still all three on—I'm amazed that they'll all be three in the same room, just—that's how they like to sleep.

It sounds like they're really friends.

Yeah, they get along. You know, kids—like my sister—we got along super, but we had our few arguments, very few, but she made a few mistakes. [Laughter] Well, the terrible thing with her CI may have told you; I hate to repeat), but going to school, and I'd get in a class, and I'd say, "William Harrah."

"Oh, William Harrah. Are you Margaret's brother?"

"Yes

"Well, I expect great things from you." (See, she was straight-A.) "So I expect great things—" well, you know, once or twice, but class after class. And about the semester's half over, and I'm doin' a C-minus, and it's—"Would you mind staying after school, William?" and how "your sister was zah zah zah," and, "I know you can do it," da da da, da da.

I sure didn't like my sister for that, except I was kinda proud of her. So occasionally you do get talkin' about grades even among the bum students, and I—"Well, my sister's straight A!" She really was, too. I'm sure they didn't keep track of it that way in those days, but I'm sure she got out of high school with a 3.9, somethin', just—one or two things she missed, and which I'm always a little suspicious of that straight 4.0 anyway 'cause there's enough personalities where the teacher just doesn't like blond kids or somethin', you know. Well, she worked hard in school, and pretty good self-discipline.

Well, about everything in life, there's a lot of self-discipline, which I don't have too much of. Darn it!

It takes a lot of discipline to do what you have done.

Well, some discipline, yeah, I do have, like my exercising. But I took the easy way on that, and I had to do it the hard way, 'cause I started jogging, and it was Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. Three days a week is adequate, if you go a mile; that is adequate, for me, anyway. But I couldn't do it, because Tuesday I'd look at my watch, "Oh gee, I'm runnin' late today, so I'll do it tomorrow; I won't do it today." Then Wednesday'd come—I'd be runnin' late again. Then Thursday I'd feel real guilty, and I'd do it, then Friday and Saturday I'd miss. So what's the answer? I really fought it for years. And the answer is, do it every day, without fail. It's not self-discipline; you have no choice. So it just works super. Then you have to say it's Tuesday, you have to do it, that's self-discipline. But you've set a rule for yourself that you gotta do it every day, rain or shine, good or—you know—and the only way I couldn't is if I stay in bed, why, that would let me out; so it's real easy. It's not self-discipline; it's just goin' by my own rules.

Is there anything more you want to say about your family?

Oh, Okay, yeah, well, my grandfather—see, my mother, she was a Fisk [Amanda]. And her father died when she was a young girl or young lady. And her mother died soon after my mother was married, I think. So, I never knew either one of them. And my father's father, I remember him, but he died; his name was Adam [Harrah], which I named my boy—John Adam. So my father's name

was John, and my grandfather was Adam. And he died in his sixties (sixty-two, I think) of cancer, which that was real new then. And that was the first funeral in the family—my first funeral. And I can remember it like it was yesterday. The car my father drove, it was a Marmon. I think that was 1919. He was a very popular man, and he was a nice man.

And I remember he gave us—we kids—and World War I, there were Liberty Bonds that they encouraged you to buy, and so he bought some; he had money. And he bought a hundred-dollar bond; there were three of us kids at the time—my sister, and I, and a cousin Martha. (See, my father was one of three, and he had two sisters.) But there were three grandchildren, and so he wanted to give 'em Liberty Bonds. So, with a hundred dollars. And he went to buy 'em, and they had two one-hundreds, and they didn't have—so he had to get two fifties. So he gave my sister a hundred, and he gave my cousin a hundred (she was older than I was, so I guess that's why she got the hundred), and then he gave me two fifties. But he felt real bad about the two fifties to me and apologized. You know, here it is, a hundred dollars, more than I'd ever seen in my life. And "Sorry, William, but we've run out of hundreds, and I have to give you the two fifties. II

And I was delighted to get it, and I said something that was nice, you know. I said, "Well, if they lost theirs, they'd lose it all; if I lost one, I'd still have fifty," or some

He was a lawyer in Iowa and rather successful. And he and my grandmother moved to California in 1911 (somethin' like that)—no, about '10; I was born in '11. They moved out, and my father moved out a year or so later. And my grandfather was semi-retired, and he did have some money; they had a wonderful home in Pasadena, I can remember that. And then my father moved

out-- father and mother--and they moved to South Pasadena, which was a suburb; it was entirely a separate city, but it was lower-cost housing [chuckles]. And that's where I was born, in South Pasadena.

But my grandfather was—he looked like, like you were casting a movie with a distinguished southern gentleman. He was tall and [with] white hair that he wore quite long. And he had a habit that I didn't notice, but my folks talked about it, of when you'd say something, and he would correct you for no reason; that he'd just like to try and make things better is the only reason I can understand. There're two examples— my own father one time was out with some kids, and they'd stolen some watermelons. And it was no big thing; apparently the farmer was almost a friend, and he had plenty of watermelons. So my father said, "We stole some watermelons."

And my grandfather said, "Oh, I wouldn't say 'stole.'"

And my father said, "Okay, what would you. say?"

And he thought, and he thought, and he thought, and he knew he was in a corner 'cause he couldn't think of anything. So finally he said, "I'd probably say 'swipe'" [laughs]. But he didn't talk that way!

And another story I like to tell on 'im, which is a true story—my father was real smart. And my grandfather was a nice man, but totally unmechanical; he never drove a car in his life. And he could never learn to ride a bicycle, which shocked me, that anyone named Harrah couldn't ride a bicycle, 'cause I was such a bicycle freak. But the trick that my father pulled was—my father would have a bicycle, and he'd bang it up or somethin', and so then he'd talk his father into gettin' a bicycle. And his father'd say, "Well, I can't ride a bicycle."

(And this is all reported to me, but I think it's pretty true.) So my father would say, "Well, you can learnt anybody can learn."

And—"Well, maybe I should. It'd save a lot of trouble gettin' to the office and all if I had a bicycle—could ride it. Okay."

So then my father would pick the bicycle that he, my father, liked, for him. And so then my grandfather'd get it home, and he'd try to ride it and he'd just fall off and fall off, so he—"Poohy!" So then he'd give it to my father [laughs]. Kept my father in bicycles!

Then my grandmother, like my grandfather was six-one or -two, pretty tall, and my grandmother was exactly five feet. And she weighed about ninety-five, I remember, the cutest little thing you ever saw. And she was the boss, and without any question. It was obvious to me, and I was only seven or eight years old that between my grandfather and grandmother, my grandmother was the boss. It was not rude or crude; it was just, they're gonna decide somethin', my grandmother would decide—whether they're goin' to the church or goin' to the— wherever. And my grandmother's the only person in the world that my father ever would listen to. Like my mother would just—they got along quite well, but my father was the boss, no question. But my grandmother would say, "John! So and so and so on!"—he'd, well, he might squirm a little or so, but when she put her foot down, he would listen, which surprised me, but also I respected him for it 'cause I thought, gee, you know, and he's so independent, that I thought, gee, to be able to kowtow to that little five-foot lady there. He was so nice to her.

We had homes in Venice after she moved out of Pasadena. See, they were in Pasadena; we were in South Pasadena, and my father started goin' to the beach and he just loved it. So he bought a home on the beach, where I was raised (I don't remember South

Pasadena). And then my grandmother would visit, and then they liked it so much, then they moved down to the beach, so we all wound up in Venice.

Then later we moved to Hollywood, my father and mother and sister and I, which was a good thing. My grandmother stayed at the beach. I went to grammar school in Venice and junior high school in Venice. Then high school, which is more serious—and Venice had a high school; it was quite adequate, I'm sure, but Hollywood High was really classy, and I went to Hollywood. That was one of the highlights of my education, was goin' to Hollywood High School, 'cause it was somethin'. You know, there was L.A. High, and there was Manchester, and there was—on and on and on; but Hollywood High was special. I just liked the school, I liked the location, I liked teachers. I liked Hollywood High School—still [chuckles] like to talk about it.

Then my mother was—did I tell you about her?

Please do that.

I didn't want to leave her out, is all, 'cause she ended tragically, you know; she killed herself, which was real sad. She had a drinking problem. And it just got worse and worse, and terrible. And it really messed our family up. I mean, you know, I didn't suffer from it, and my sister didn't, and my father didn't—didn't hurt us individually, but as a family it kinda messed us up. And then the windup was—and it was so futile that she had to die because she had a phony quack that I'd steered her to, and I thought he was a good doctor, and he hadn't helped her a bit. I don't know if you've ever seen anybody with a serious drinking problem, and it's pretty bad. But there were things could've helped her, you know; there's a pill she could've been, you know—proper

prescription could've handled it, but she just had to have a drink, and it was real sad. And she was in her fifties, too, which is way too young.

And my other aunt—there were two aunts, Mildred and Isabelle—Isabelle's still alive. That's my ninety-one-year-old aunt that lives in Tucson who we go see every birthday and a couple of other times a year, and sharp as a tack, mentally. And my other aunt was Mildred, who was—I never liked Mildred. She had married a wealthy man, and I think she married him for his money. And he lost it instantly, and she had a tough time, the rest of her life. And she resented—see, my aunt, her sister, had money, and my father had money, and Mildred didn't have any, and she just hated anybody in the family that had money, really; she put up a front. But she was pretty bad, and I don't know, maybe she had a right to be, but I remember my grandmother died, and she left a will, of course, but she didn't put in every painting and every little heirloom. And she had a, you know, a room—would just be little things here and little things there. And after the funeral we went back to the house, and I think somebody—they served tea and all, and I think Uncle Rod broke out a bottle or somethin', which was proper to do because everybody felt kinda bad. And I remember Mildred just started movin' and grabbin' this and grabbin' that, and everybody. And finally somebody said, "Well, what are you doin'?"

And she said, "Well, Mother said I could have that, and Mother said I could have this [gesture, grabbing], and Mother said I could have that."

And my mother being married into the family—she didn't say anything. And my father, boy, he got right into it. And he and Mildred had harsh words right then and there, which he was right. And then Mildred quit speaking to my father and mother for

some time, but they didn't care. But it was sad that it had to happen that way. And Isabelle, who's just wonderful, Mildred got some of her things. But Isabelle's the type that just wouldn't say a word—you know, "Well, so what?" you know. But, poor Mildred was just grabbin' right and left. Some things had value, some didn't, but she just grabbed—well, of the things visible, she must've grabbed two-thirds of 'em right—I think she'd taken 'em all if my father hadn't started yellin' at her.

But our family was good, you know. My mother died tragically, but we had many happy years. My grandmother was a big one for Thanksgiving and Christmas. Everybody showed up for dinner, and it was command, but we wanted to go; it was somethin' we looked forward to. And there were thirteen, I believe. Let's see, there were four— [starts writing] four of us and four Douglasses and three Burnhams and Grandmother and May Aydelott (that was my mother's housekeeper, who'd raised me, and she was just part of the family). So there were thirteen of us for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and we used to kid about it—thirteen at the table. That was fun, those days—I can still remember them.

One of the things that I like to have people do in kind of finishing up one of these is to tell me what it all means to you—kind of a philosophy of life or something like that.

Oh, just what I was brought up with, you know, that you're honest, and you're clean, and you don't steal, and you don't— all the things you should be. You're polite, and there was a lot of "let live." Like goin' to church, my mother had so much church, and my father was never much of a churchgoer, that they didn't push me at all church-wise. If I wanted to go, fine, but if I didn't want to go, that was fine.

And then school, I don't know if I told you my father, he didn't push me at all, which was very disappointing 'cause I would complain about, boy, it was tough, you know. And he'd say, "Well, why don't you quit and get a job, make some money?"

And I—"Oh, wait a minute, wait a minute! It's—I can handle it." He didn't really think of it as—. See, I hate to keep repeating that one. I may have told you, he was self-taught, you know. Well, [if] he wanted to know somethin', he'd get a book and read it, and he knew it. See, schools were a waste of time as far as he was concerned. It was all right if you went, but if you didn't go, you could do just fine without goin' and save all that time. In his case it worked, but most people, they have to go to school to get an education.

But my philosophy is be kind and be nice and, you know, you re—come first, or right up there. Like my boys are ahead of me, and my wife. And then it descends down; just as people get further away from you, they mean less to you, but family comes first, of course. And then friends and loyal employees, why—you know, like Bob Hudgens means a lot to me.

No great big thing, you know, just do right and live and let live, enjoy, stay healthy, so on. Health is real important; I don't know how I got into that, but I learned that from my father. Well, there's a lot of that—real obvious in life. Without your health, it's nothin'; then if you have health, why, you're lucky because a lot of people don't. It's sure worth taking care of. And I abused mine—fortunately got over it in time.

We have been taping now for about thirty hours. Has anybody else done it this long?

Oh no, I've enjoyed it. Only thing I haven't is when the two hours I felt, you know, gee, I

could be at HAC lookin' at the new Studebaker or something, but really, no, I've enjoyed it.

It's fun remembering, and a lot of cute stories (or at least cute to me), and family, where people goofed, and your dreams and all. I'm very happy considerin', 'cause so many of the years I was very insecure, and really, I kept up a pretty good front, you know. I looked good, and my clothes were good, and my car was good, but inside I was really scared, you know. I didn't really think I "had it," and anyone [that] was successful, I admired and wondered how they did it. And I didn't think, you know, really I could ever, ever get anywhere. And when I did have some success, it was so gratifying 'cause it was such a surprise. Me! You know, of all people. Like, you know, the guy hits the fly, and you reach up and catch it—I've never done that, but you think, "It can happen," you know. You see it on TV, but the fly always goes over there, you know; it never comes to you. But it did come, and I think that was the greatest satisfaction; I realized that I could actually make a livin' and do somethin', put somethin' together. I really felt real (what's the word) incapable, really; doin' anything, you know, sure, I could park cars or somethin', but as far as runnin' a business—it's funny.

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